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Essays at Large

Works by J. C. Squire

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Essays at Large

By Solomon Eagle

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NEW  YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

[Printed in Great Britain.]

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PR 6037
Q5 E7
1922a

Gift
Publisher
773 16 1523

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The Westminster Press
411a Harrow Road
London W 9

TO
JAMES MURRAY ALLISON

PREFATORY NOTE

MOST of these papers are reprinted from the *Outlook*; a few, which seemed akin to the others, appeared in *Land and Water*, which died under the burden.

S. E.

1922.

Gift
Publisher
Feb. 11 1928

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READING IN BED

DISCUSSION amongst human beings is very difficult. There were three of us, and we talked about reading in bed. At the end of a quarter of an hour it dawned on us—we had had faint glimmerings of this before—that we had been talking about different things.

“What is the best thing to read in bed?” It sounds a sufficiently concrete item in the agenda. But we had overlooked the fact that men might read in bed with different motives. “If you were staying in a country house for the night, and found one of those little sliding bookcases on the table beside your bed, what would you like to find in it?” That also looked definite enough. But neither was really sufficiently precise. No allowance was made for temperament.

Of course, we all know what we *should* find in it. Granted a cultivated household, where the furniture was good, the walls tastefully hung, and the host and hostess *au fait* with modern literature and the latest political thought, very little latitude is conceivable. Either the small bookcase would contain two volumes of Mr. Shaw’s plays, a volume of Mr. Granville Barker’s, some Tchekov short stories, a book of sketches by Mr. Galsworthy, and a faded Ibsen volume published by the firm of Walter Scott; or else it would contain Mr. Chesterton’s “The Defendant” and “A Miscellany of Men,” Mr. Belloc’s “On Anything” and “Hills and the Sea,” a volume of essays by Mr. Lucas, and “Idlehurst.”

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Stay ! there is a third possibility : Wordsworth, " Rab and His Friends," the " Vailima Letters " and the " Essays of Elia," with Matthew Arnold's " Essays in Criticism," and something of Walter Bagehot's. These are what one would, and does repeatedly, find. The question is : What would one wish to find, and why ?

I gather that there are three objects in reading in bed. Some men pursue only one, some pursue each in turn, some have two or more in mind as alternatives at any particular moment. Firstly, you may read in bed in order to send yourself to sleep at the earliest possible moment. Well, there are occasions when one feels like that. I myself have for many years kept beside my pallet Kant's " Critique of Pure Reason." I have never got through it. I always begin again at the same place, to wit, the first line. The result is that I probably know the first three pages as well as any man alive, and that I am totally ignorant as to what comes after. I may say in self-defence that I am not in the least degree curious about what comes after ; but there it is. That is the first mode, and that the first object of reading in bed. Next there is the moderate course and the sensible object of the man who likes to read a little in bed, but does not want to be deprived of what grandmother would have called his beauty sleep. The book must not be boring ; it must not be too exciting. It must be interesting on every page but dramatic nowhere ; there must be a stream of event but no definite break. Well, I do not really think that those volumes of essays quite suit the case. The end of an essay usually comes just before that fatal,

READING IN BED

final blink, and one wants to begin another. What one needs is the book that can be begun anywhere and dropped anywhere ; and I can conceive no books better in that regard than Boswell, Gibbon, Hakluyt, and Lucas's "Life of Lamb." These are so long and so uniform that there is no hope of finishing them in a night, and no fear of worrying about a climax not reached ; and they are so good that one never minds if one does read the same pages over and over again. I found, in our discussion, that each of these species of nocturnal reading was favoured by one of my friends. But for myself I shamelessly confessed that, however tired I might be, I should always, even were the whole contents of the British Museum at call from my bed, ask for a shocker. Give me "Bulldog Drummond," "Station X," or "Trent's Last Case" and I will read in bed until dawn. Let sleep go. Let the morrow's duties go. Let health, prudence, and honour go. The bedside book for me is the book that will longest keep me awake.

It is a large subject, and one seldom discussed. Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of people every night in England read something in bed. They say nothing about it except "I read for a little last night and then slept like a top," or "I didn't feel like going to sleep last night, so I read for a bit," or "I began reading so-and-so in bed last night, and damn the book, I couldn't get to sleep until I finished it." Usually nothing at all is said ; if anything is said it is very little. Yet what a large slice of each of our lives has gone in this harmless occupation. We get our clothes off. We get our pyjamas

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on. We wind our watches. We arrange the table and the light and get into bed. We pile up, or double up, the pillows. Then we settle down to it. Sometimes the book is so exciting that all thought of sleep fades away, and we read on oblivious of everything except the unseen menace in that dark house, the boat gliding stealthily along that misty river, the Chinaman's eyes peering through that greenish-yellow fog, or the sudden crack of the revolver in that den of infamy. Sometimes we read for a while and then feel as though we could go peacefully to sleep. Sometimes we struggle desperately to gum our failing attention to the acute analysis and safe deductions of our author. Our eyes squint and swim. Our head dizzies. We feel drunk, and, dropping the book aside from lax hands, just manage to get the light out before falling back into a dense and miry slumber. We all know those fights against inevitable sleep, those resolves to reach the inaccessible end of the chapter, those swimmings in the head, those relapses into the gulf of slumber. And we all know those long readings when the mystery and suspense of the text so excite us that every creak of the stair and every fluttering of the pertinacious moths makes the heart stand still, and then keeps it beating hard for minutes. We have all turned the light out just in time; and we have all turned it out from boredom, or in an access of determined common-sense, and then turned it on again to resume the dreary reading where we left the piece of paper or the pencil in the page. But we seldom talk about it. It is a part of our really private lives, which include also our operations in the bath-room, and

READING IN BED

our contrivances for keeping, at certain moments, our clothes together. These are universal experiences which each man thinks peculiar to himself, yet which hardly anybody ever thinks worth mentioning.

LIFE AT THE MERMAID

AT breakfast, with an author more venerable, I opened a bookseller's catalogue which had just reached me from America. It contained many interesting things : manuscripts of Spaniards of whom I had never heard, early editions of old English writers of whom I had barely heard, desirable editions of the classics, this, that, and the other, and some first editions of illustrious contemporaries. I knew—I usually know as much—that I should not bother to write for anything from that catalogue, and could not pay for it if I did ; nevertheless I proceeded like a caterpillar through the items. As I turned the tenth page I had a slight shock—it wasn't really surprising—at seeing six times repeated the name of my companion. He is a man of genius, and it is all quite fit and proper that the collectors of America should give, or at least be asked to give, considerable sums of money for the first editions of his books. "Hallo," I said, "they seem to be paying through the nose now for your first editions." "Ah ?" he said. "Of course," I went on—and I was merely stating a fact—"the prices are nothing like so big as our grandchildren will pay." His answer was "Bigger — fools they!"

There suddenly flashed on me a vision of those grandchildren—a vision, be it admitted, based on the assumption that our civilisation will endure, which is not certain. I saw a spacious room with glazed bookcases, and a young bibliophile showing another his rare editions and tooled bindings. They

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fingered one after another, and at last they came to the first scarce work of my friend. I heard the conversation. "What did you give for that?" "Eighty-five pounds." "It's nice to have it with his signature in, knowing that he handled it. If he knew he might be consoled for the way people underrated him when he was alive." Probably there will be such conversations. There may be a Life of my friend ; the Life may include some of his intimate correspondence and alleged specimens of his "table-talk." They will have a pretty good idea of his character and his genius, they will know his pedigree, the state of his finances, his goings to and fro on the earth. But with their inadequate information and their incorrigible romanticism they will have no notion as to what his real daily talk was like, as distinguished from his more intense conversation. Do we really know any dead man in his daily life ? Dr. Johnson, some would say. We know his voice and his habits of mind better than most people's ; yet even Boswell did not take down anything unless it seemed to be a little above the ordinary level, to have some special point or value. A gramophone record of Dr. Johnson's words through a whole day would supply us with something quite new. It would also diminish a little Dr. Johnson's apparent stature. We see the great dead as larger than human because we have of them, however much we have, only a refined essence. When we do really meet an ordinary fact—such as the fact that Mary Shelley irritated Percy (in the throes of composition) by asking him to fetch her cotton-reel from the corner where it had rolled—it stands out as something

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very illuminating. Meditating thus I attended a literary dinner, a regular dinner, one of a series that might conceivably be mentioned (for the oddest things turn up) in future literary memoirs and then in the histories. Good things were said, interesting books were discussed : but not all the time, no, not all the time. And I wondered what the meetings of the Romantics were actually like, and what those evenings at the Mermaid Tavern. We know there were great times at the Mermaid, and one in fond reminiscence said that the frequenters would put their whole souls in a jest. Nevertheless other things were said, and I conceive that there *were* tracts of conversation like this :

SHAKESPEARE : I don't think much of this fish.

BEN JONSON : The fish has been filthy the last three times.

SHAKESPEARE : It's always like that at these places. They do you very well to start with, and when they think they've got you fixed it goes off.

DRAYTON : The waiters are getting pretty uncivil, too. Especially that ugly brute with the squint. I distrust that man.

BEN JONSON : I'm sick of the place. It's no better than the Sun was.

SHAKESPEARE : But is there anywhere else that we could try ? Is it not better to endure the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of ?

BEN JONSON : You might leave it to somebody else to quote your works.

SHAKESPEARE : I don't think the company has any right to complain so long as I don't quote yours.

LIFE AT THE MERMAID

CHAPMAN : Oh, shut up, you two, you're always at it !

BEAUMONT : We never seem to be able to discuss anything properly here. The point is, can we get a better dinner anywhere else, and, if so, where ?

FLETCHER : At the same price, Francis ?

BEAUMONT : Of course, Jack, that goes without saying.

CHAPMAN : Why shouldn't we go to the Devil ?

SHAKESPEARE : Speak for yourself.

BEN JONSON : It's a pity you can't remember to keep your weaker witticisms for the theatre, where they seem to like them.

CHAPMAN : The Devil really is rather a good place. Mrs. Jones is a nice old woman, and her cellar is extraordinarily good.

SHAKESPEARE : It may be, but all I can say is that the last pint of sack I drank there nearly poisoned me. It seems to me that we'd better stick where we are. But it's a rotten place.

ALL : Yes, rotten !

SHAKESPEARE : When's your new play coming on, Ben ?

BEN JONSON : Oh, he says he thinks he'll get it on next week ! It's a lie, of course. These managers make me sick. If he doesn't hurry up I shall publish it first.

SHAKESPEARE : Oh, I shouldn't do that !

BEN JONSON : Oh, we know *you* wouldn't ! You'd never publish it at all. You'd leave it to some swindling printer to get it out, full of misprints. Personally I happen to be interested in what I write.

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CHAPMAN: Oh, for God's sake stop quarrelling! You make the place a bear-garden. What's the news about Spain?

DONNE: Nothing doing. I saw the Lord Chamberlain yesterday and he said he'd just seen old Gondomar, and he seemed very amiable. There's some talk of the Prince of Wales marrying an Infanta.

SHAKESPEARE: It's enough to make poor old Drake turn in his grave.

BEN JONSON: Oh, you're a sentimentalist!

SHAKESPEARE: Chuck it about; I don't mind. All I know is that the more I see of politics the less I like them.

DRAYTON: Nice boy, the Prince of Wales.

BEAUMONT (whispering loudly to FLETCHER): No wonder Drayton thinks so, considering that the kid has just given him fifty quid to help publish his rotten epic.

DRAYTON: I heard what you said. It's not true. It's all that Browne's doing. He's always putting these absurd stories about.

SHAKESPEARE: Don't take it to heart, Mike; they're only pulling your leg.

BEN JONSON: Faugh! Mutton again. I don't believe they've given us anything but mutton for eighteen months.

SHAKESPEARE: Mutton is so sheep, you see.

(*Loud howls.*)

CHAPMAN (to DRAYTON): How many lines is your epic?

DRAYTON: I can't tell yet, the second part isn't finished. I should think it might run to ten thousand.

LIFE AT THE MERMAID

CHAPMAN : My Homer is more than that, I should think.

SHAKESPEARE : Such long lines too. If you were being paid by the line I should advise your splitting them in halves.

FLETCHER : Do you know Mary Fitton?

DONNE : No ; I think Shakespeare does ; I've heard rather odd things about her. Don't you know Miss Fitton, William ?

SHAKESPEARE : No ; I've just met her. She seemed to be rather an ass ; clever, of course, but boring. She will insist on talking about books all the time. I met her at the Bacons'.

FLETCHER (to BEAUMONT) : I don't suppose there's anything in it. This town is a fearful place for gossip.

SHAKESPEARE : I say, you people, I'm awfully sorry to break up the party, but I've got to get back to Stratford by next Friday and a man has offered me a lift. I simply must get there.

(*Rises to go.*)

DONNE : What's the hurry ? Don't tell us you ever *do* anything at Stratford.

SHAKESPEARE : Oh, it's a deal with a man about wool ! I don't see why one shouldn't turn an honest penny when one gets the chance.

BEAUMONT : Well, just one more, William.

SHAKESPEARE : All right, just one more, but it will have to be a quick one. . . .

I have telescoped history a little, and I have been at no pains to achieve an archaic realism by sprinkling the dialogue with marrys, gulls, wittols, and argosies. But I daresay that is what the Mermaid was like.

THE NEW STYLE OF MEMOIR

IT is about time somebody made a heavy protest against the latest form of memoir—the contemporary memoir in which the author takes advantage of opportunities which have been given to him as a private person, pillories those who have innocently admitted him to their homes, repeats strictly private conversations, or describes purely private assemblies out of which he would have been promptly booted if anybody present had known what he was up to. There have been four or five of these in the last few years. We all read them (we can't help it), and they are commercially profitable. Nothing but a dead set against offending authors will stop their increase.

Now I need scarcely say that I am not arguing against the recording of any and every event, literary or political, likely to be of historical interest : of any dinner party, conversation, secret intrigue, odd, strange, significant, or diverting word or deed of any species whatever. We can say what we like about the dead. Doubtless *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* has an element of truth in it : we should be especially careful about calumniating a person who is no longer able to defend himself. But even here one remembers that calumny against a living person may not merely damage his reputation but ruin his life, so that if you *are* to be maligned there is (in the words of the poet)

A good deal to be said
For being dead.

THE NEW STYLE OF MEMOIR

The thoughtless persons who quote *De mortuis* do not seem to realise that if their precious maxim were literally acted upon all history, and all biography, would be abolished at one swoop. No man could really be expected to hoax himself into thinking it amusing, or serviceable, to write history on these lines :

So Henry VIII died, as he had lived, in the odour of sanctity, beloved by his wife (Catherine of Aragon) who was his first and only romance, and revered by his people. His spare features and sympathetic deep-sunken eyes, so vividly preserved for us on the canvases of Holbein, attest the unworldly character of the man and the austerity of his life. No unfortunate incident marred the perfect serenity of his reign, save one only, the execution of Sir T. More, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of an official who never recovered from his remorse, though no blame could possibly attach to him. The King was out of town and heard nothing until too late. He wore mourning for the rest of his life. . . .

If there was one thing Charles II detested more than marital infidelity, it was easy cynicism but no—all his contemporaries are dead, so there cannot possibly have been any infidelity or cynicism for him to detest], and the industry with which he served the commonwealth has never been surpassed by an English monarch, though every English monarch has equalled it. One of his noble actions was his refusal, when short of cash, owing to his large benefactions, of a gift of

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money from Louis XIV on the ground that it might *appear* to put him under an improper obligation. That, of course, was far from being in the mind of the French King, and it is difficult to say upon which Sovereign the incident reflects most credit. . . .

Napoleon, Emperor of the French, a man distinguished for the sacredness which he attached to human life and the implicit trust he put in human nature, died at St. Helena in 1821. He had abdicated in 1815 owing to failing health, and chose that sunny island on the advice of his doctors, finding a great solace during his last years in the congenial conversation of an Englishman, Sir Hudson Lowe, who exiled himself in order to be near his invalid friend. His name, as a benefactor of mankind, stands in the company of those of Elizabeth Fry, Frederick the Great, St. Francis of Assisi, Lord Rockingham, and Nero. . . .

An interesting figure of the time was Charles Peace, a quaint and lovable Yorkshireman, with a great love of adventure, and a delightful talent as a violinist. He was born in Yorkshire, but lived latterly in South London, though he died away from home.

That is the *reductio ad absurdum* of that over-driven and foolish proverb. We want about the dead the truth, and if our age has no Pepys, no Horace Walpole, no Charles Greville, posterity will be deprived of both the edification and the amusement to which it is entitled. Let people record as much as they can

THE NEW STYLE OF MEMOIR

of those who are likely to be interesting to our descendants. But let them keep it for our descendants : or at least let them give their records time to get too stale to embarrass the persons they are writing about.

I don't suppose, that is to say, that Lord Morley would much care if anybody now published his dinner-table, or more intimate, conversation at the time of the First Home Rule Bill, although he is still alive. But if people are to repeat private conversations they had last year—there *may* be exceptional occasions when urgent considerations of public interest make such a thing, after solemn reflection, seem right—private life becomes impossible. It is only a stage from printing reports of private discussions three or four years ago to treating private conversations as news. Unless some action is taken against gross offenders, it will not be long before some more reckless and enterprising successor of Colonel Repington's goes to a dinner one night and has in the papers next morning a description of what everybody present said and did. You cannot elaborately swear everybody present to secrecy before you sit down ; yet you never know who is going on the loose as a diarist next. Yet how can one keep a rein upon one's tongue, or how would anything ever get done if everybody were mute as a fish on every subject except the weather ? Civilisation is only held together by an honourable respect for private life, by pledges unspoken, but nevertheless implicit. There are thousands of people in London who, if they cared to print their recent recollections or their diaries, could make sensations

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and large sums of money. Even my ears, which have not listened to the whisperings of the Great with a hundredth part of Colonel Repington's assiduity, have received impressions which, if I were to transmit them to paper, would be quoted in every newspaper, titillate a large public, cause distress in many homes, and give trouble to a fair number of important people. Are we coming to a time when I shall be considered rather a brisk fellow if I suddenly launch them all upon a printer?

It isn't only that things may be divulged which will cause serious trouble, though in recent diaries there have been these, but that people object to having their private lives and characters, however flattering, discussed in print at all. It is irritating to find one's friends saying in print that one is fond of one's children or that one gave a luncheon at which the food was very good. People don't like it. It isn't vanity, nor is it modesty, that makes them shrink from the modern sort of publicity: it is merely the common human desire for a measure of privacy and the common human feeling that there is an honourable obligation to respect that privacy if you are admitted into it. All else apart, even when harmless truths are told, they are often so told as to give false impressions. For myself I am not sufficiently, I am happy to say, of public interest to make it worth anybody's while to publish the fact that he came to lunch at my house on Sunday, that So-and-So and So-and-So were there, and that we said this and that about the French, Mr. Wells, the Russians, and President Wilson. But if anybody were to do that he would get a pretty hot reception

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next time he attempted to speak to me. And I cannot understand how those who have been molested can behave otherwise to persons who have thus annoyed them.

PRONUNCIATION

THE conversationalist in this country has a thorny road to tread. A correspondent writes, poor thing, to ask me, in confidence, how he should pronounce "Quixote," a word he finds frequently cropping up in his talk. His natural inclination and early practice was to speak of Don Quixote as though the cavalier had an English "x" in his name. Of late years he has found, when in circles where people really do know things, a growing tendency to pronounce the name in the Spanish way—which we may represent, though inadequately, by the spelling Keehotte. Now, my correspondent, being a sailor, is a shy and sensitive man. He feels sheepish. He does not want to drop "Don Quixote" out of his life altogether, as it is one of his favourite books, and he even has theories about it. But he is afraid. If he says "Quix" in the coarse English manner he fears that the experienced and supercilious landsman may stare at him as at an illiterate boor ; but he shrinks from tackling the other pronunciation, partly because he knows he couldn't do it without looking self-conscious, partly because he does not wish to affect an acquaintance with Spanish which he does not possess, and partly because he is sure he would never get it right. He might even be so far from right that somebody, not understanding or pretending not to understand, might make him repeat the outlandish syllables, a process which would cause him to blush all down his back. What, he asks, should he do ?

PRONUNCIATION

Say "Quix" and make no bones about it. It is an easier instance than most of its kind. "Quixote" has had an English pronunciation for years, a pronunciation as established as our pronunciation of "Paris," which no Englishman talking to another Englishman would dream of calling Paree. Not only this, but it has generated an English adjective. I doubt if the most pedantic or the most priggish of men says "Keehottic" for "Quixotic"; yet it is grotesque to pronounce the one word in the English way whilst perspiring to restore an alien pronunciation to the other. But the case would be quite strong enough without that. There is no point whatever in forcing a foreign pronunciation (unless we are talking to foreigners) of some names unless we do the same for all. To go no further from Don Quixote than its author, there is Cervantes. He was a great man, and there are many interesting things about him. We know that—

The Spaniards think Cervantes
Worth half-a-dozen Dantes,
An opinion resented bitterly
By the people of Italy.

He wrote one of the narrative masterpieces of the world, and thought it much inferior to his other works, which nobody can now read. But the point about him in our present connection is that his "C" is not pronounced by the Spaniards as an English "C," but rather (I hope I am correct—I do not know any Spanish) as a "th"; and when the Spaniards don't sound "c" as "th" they sound it

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as “k.” Yet the prig has still to begin operations who will call him (otherwise than because of some defect of utterance) Thervantes at an English dinner-table. Some words have always had a specially English pronunciation ; some (like Calais which Englishmen used to pronounce Callis) have had one and lost it. We can never be thoroughly systematic about it, but the man is a fool who arbitrarily selects some foreign word which we have incorporated and attempts to denaturalise it again.

“Don Quixote” is not the only name now being contested. The generation has not yet arisen which will suddenly begin calling München Munchen, but the Trafalgár affectation has been in full swing for some years. In Nelson’s day and long afterwards all Englishmen said “Trafálgar.”

“Twas in Trafalgar’s Bay,
the song ran, not—

“Twas in the Bay of Trafalgar.

Then somebody discovered—what was no doubt known to many of Nelson’s seamen, not to mention Drake’s and, for all I know, Hanno’s—that the Spaniards accented the last syllable. Such a piece of knowledge was too precious not to be paraded, and there is now a double pronunciation. The “masses” still stick to the English pronunciation ; the educated are almost evenly divided, though most of them, perhaps say Trafalgár when they remember to. There is only one thing to be said in favour of Trafalgár. Trafálgar will not rhyme ; the

PRONUNCIATION

battle is constantly being written about ; and Trafalgar will rhyme very nicely with words like star, avatar, nenuphar, bar, and cigar. But here again it is easy to point out the absurdity of the priggish pronunciation. The twin of Trafalgar is Waterloo. No foreigner pronounces that word as we do. The local pronunciation is Vaterlo ; and when a Frenchman recites Victor Hugo's stirring stanzas about it he says :

Vaterlo, Vaterlo, Vaterlo, morne plaine.

Now, it is plainly preposterous to make a great effort to pronounce Trafalgar like an Andalusian whilst ignoring the French and Belgian pronunciation of Waterloo. Possibly "Vaterlo" will be the next affectation ; and then we shall be asked to drop "Rome" for "Roma."

In all these matters of pronouncing foreign names the maxim, not always applicable elsewhere, clearly applies, "what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us." Since we cannot be logical and pronounce all foreign words as foreigners do, we might at least avoid futile pedantry and wanton changes. The people who are always trying to impose these tasks on our clumsy English tongues are always either men who are proud of possessing unimportant knowledge which others do not possess, or still baser men who wish to be thought the possessors of such knowledge. They do not confine their ravages to our traditional pronunciations ; they are equally fond of tinkering with spelling. It doesn't much matter how we spell the name of a foreign town or country so long as we all spell it

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alike. But once we have found a spelling comfortable it is maddening to have to alter it merely because some vainglorious fellow has seen a foreign map. When we were younger all Englishmen spelt "Corea"; that has gone, and "Korea" has taken its place. The change would have been reasonable had the House of Commons, the British Academy, the Large Black Pig Society, or some other body which we might entrust with the control of our orthography, decided that all our hard English c's should be turned into k's. But we just pounce on this one unhappy word, whilst never thinking of bringing Kochin China, the Kaliph, Kolombo, Kalkutta, or the Kape of Good Hope into line with it. It is no good saying that the Koreans and the Chinese use a k and not a hard c; for they use neither, preferring some sign which looks like a fragment of a bird-cage. Some one prig was originally responsible for that alteration, and he had a numerous progeny during the late war. There was the man who suddenly began—and half of the others espied him within a month—calling the Sea of Marmora the Sea of Marmara, having seen that spelling in a French paper, or perhaps in a footnote of Sir Richard Burton's. He was a kindred spirit of the other pioneer who dropped the "o" out of what, until the war, was always spelt "Roumania." Every year now we shall find the attentions of these laborious scholars devoted to some new work. Possibly Morocco (our spelling cannot conceivably represent the Moorish spelling) will begin appearing in leading articles as "Marrakha," or "Marrakka," or "Marakh," or some such thing. Or the

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gross Englishdom of "The Hague" will revolt the fastidious taste of some journalist who has done a week's walking tour in Holland, and we shall be treated to Den Haag or 'S Gravenshage or whatever it is. Or the Bay of Napoli will start creeping in, or the Shah of Persia will become the Tchah of Perzhia, or Bokhara will become Bukhara, or Teheran will become Tihran. We cannot prevent these pointless alterations ; needs must be that follies should come, though woe unto him through whom they come. But as individuals those of us who desire to avoid affectation and prefer, as a general rule, to let well alone should make a point of conforming to existing usage in spelling, and in pronunciation, of employing those sounds which are more comfortable to our tongues and more conformable to the English language and traditions. Next time my correspondent refers to Cervantes he should say Quixote with a "q" and with an "x," and say it both loud and clear. If anybody looks at him he should then repeat it without shamefacedness. And, provided his nerves hold out, if someone should try the Spanish pronunciation on him after he himself has used the other, let him pretend not to understand. Above all, let him never make a cowardly mumbling noise in the hope that it may be taken for *either* pronunciation of *any* word.

BY LEWIS CARROLL

A MAN can never tell where he will find books for sale nor what he will find if he enters the shop. The greatest discovery I myself ever made was made in a grubby second-hand shop off the Marylebone Road, where a few dozen dilapidated volumes were sprinkled about among old military medals, cane chairs, Victorian photographs, and sooty toilet-ware. The other day I found myself with two hours to spare in a cathedral town. The rain suddenly began to come down in solid sheets. I hurried along until I came to a likely doorway and found myself in another, though a greatly superior shop, where the products of all the arts lived in harmonious disarray. The books numbered some hundreds, and I set myself to a systematic inspection. Had the weather been finer or I less equable, the inspection would not long have continued. I have said it was a cathedral town. One did not therefore, expect to find piles of the most modern literature, and, in fact, there was none save a few novels, such as the early books of Mr. Frankfort Moore, which had been at last superannuated by the ladies of the Close. And the old books were considerably more attractive outside than inside. Their worn jackets of calf or pig or vellum were noble ; but the collection of dead sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century pedantry they contained would have appalled Sir John Sandys himself. They were not even the works of the best known of dead theologians and editors : not one of their authors had been heard of

for generations. "Some of these must be rare," remarked the dealer optimistically. "I don't doubt it," I replied. "In that case," said he, "if one could only find people who want these particular books, we should get good prices for them." His logic was irrefutable; the fact he ignored was the very stubborn fact that not one being in the world ever could want these books. Nevertheless, I opened all the big ones on the open shelves, then all the little ones, and then, still hopeful, the lower rows in a closed cupboard. Nothing came to light. I do not like to stay a long time in a shop and buy nothing. I, therefore, gloomily selected the Cambridge University Calendar for 1826—which is somewhat out of date, for scarcely half of the present dons were on the books then—and a late copy of Somerville's "The Chase," and prepared to go.

It was the hour of luncheon; my hands were covered with dust and my overcoat sticky with cob-webs. I began searching my pockets for money. But there was one top shelf in the glazed cupboard which I had not yet reached. One never knows what one will come across, I reminded myself. Most of its contents were visible at a distance; dull little rows of the British Essayists, "The World," "The Microcosm," "The Traveller," or their analogues. But a few unlabelled books in the corner were worth taking down, and I took them down. One was "Reading Without Tears," which I certainly could not read without tears; there were also pamphlets about growing roses and resisting sin; and there were volumes of verses by extinct spinsters and clergymen. Almost the last I reached was a small, flat-backed book in

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faded dark purple, with a sober blind-stamped pattern around the covers and the title, in large gilt letters—comma and all—“Index, to In Memoriam,” I opened it : “Rare, 2s. 6d.,” was the inscription. It was at least rare enough for me never to have heard of it, though it was published by Moxon in 1862, and carried at the end Moxon’s January, 1862, list. It would be an exaggeration to call it a readable volume. It is not an entire concordance, but every phrase is indexed under the principal nouns and verbs it contains. A desire to economise typesetting led the authors to abbreviate the main words in their quotations. The result is forty pages in double columns filled with entries, oddly comic in their effect, like :

I do but *s* because I must
Grief as deep as *l*
The common *l* of good
Office of the social *h*
Abuse the genial *h*
To beat the *g*
And said “The *d*, the *d*”
More faith in honest *d*
Din and steam of *t*
The *u* of “*I*” and “*me*.”

I lingered over it, and then I looked at Moxon’s list, a list which would do credit to any publisher. “Works by the Poet Laureate” headed it ; underneath the table came—what do you think ?

* * * The above works are always to be had in Morocco Bindings.

Even at this date we could have told Mr. Moxon that. He did not show, however, all the respect he might have shown to the Poet Laureate. There was a little room left on that first page of the catalogue, and he squeezed three more titles into it. One was Col. George Greenwood's "Hints on Horsemanship to a Nephew and Niece," no doubt an excellent manual enunciating right principles and warning against dangerous errors ; but the others, cheek by jowl with the works of Tennyson, as though there were no difference between them, were "Athelstan, a Poem," and some Lays of the Better Land, by E. L. What were they and where are they now ?

Haydn's "Dictionary of Dates" was in Moxon's list ; so were the works of Lamb and Hood, the illustrated editions of Rogers, "works by the late William Wordsworth," and numbers of Coleridge's books, including the second edition of "Biographia Literaria." Mrs. Shelley's edition of Shelley comes on the same page as Goethe's "Faust," translated by "A. Hayward, Esq., Q.C." This was Abraham, the conversationalist of the Athenæum Club : his prose translation was already in its seventh edition, but I fancy it is now as little known as that deplorably feeble volume of original verses which he allowed himself to publish. Hogg's "Life of Shelley" and Trelawny's "Recollections" head the last page with two other books, known still by name but scarcely otherwise : Milnes' Poems in three volumes, and Talfourd's dramatic works in one. Talfourd certainly had fame ; this was the eleventh edition of his collected plays. But he fades. Last year I saw the original complete manuscript of his masterpiece

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“ Ion ” offered by a Scottish bookseller for £5. Five pounds : and I was not even tempted to buy it.

“ Rare, 2s. 6d.,” . . . a concordance, which I can never conceivably use, to “ In Memoriam ” . . . Moxon’s list of fifty years ago. . . . “ I think I will have this,” I said. I turned back to the fly-leaf and examined an inscription I had casually noticed there. This is how it ran :

To A. W. Dubourg with sincere regards from
C. L. Dodgson, one of the compilers, Oct., 1873.

I passed it to the merchant for confirmation of the price. He also glanced at the inscription, but he did not take it in, and as he had just been telling me, with every appearance of delight, of the rare first editions which he had bought for next to nothing from people who were unfit to look after them, I felt no scruple about refraining from explanation. C. L. Dodgson was Lewis Carroll ; it may be that his Index is as well known as his Alice ; I at least had never seen it before, and I conceive that few people know the book and fewer will know that he was “ one of the compilers.” I imagined that conversation in 1873, eleven years after that labour of love had been completed. Mr. Dubourg was, I seem to have heard, a Parliamentary official of some sort. Perhaps they were intimate friends ; or perhaps they met occasionally at dinner parties, and one evening the dialogue, known to most authors in most ages, took place :

DUBOURG : I don’t think he’s ever done anything better than “ In Memoriam.”

BY LEWIS CARROLL

DODGSON : No ; I agree ; it is a beautiful thing ; I read it constantly.

DOUBOURG : So do I ; but I wish it were easier to find one's way about it. Somebody ought to make an index to it, so that we could look up any particular phrase.

DODGSON (*with a slightly wistful smile*) : Oh, it's been done. As a matter of fact I did it myself eleven years ago ; at any rate, I and another man. But I'm not surprised you've not seen it. Nobody ever has.

DUBOURG : Is it still to be got ?

DODGSON : I shouldn't think so. I should imagine it was remaindered or pulped years ago.

DUBOURG : That is a nuisance.

DODGSON : As a matter of fact I've got about twenty copies at home. If you like I'll send you one when I get back.

DUBOURG : Oh, thanks ever-so much. I should love to have one. Don't forget to write your name in it.

But possibly it didn't happen like this. Possibly it was another Dubourg. Possibly—unpleasing thought—it was even another C. L. Dodgson. I shall look it up.

PRESS-CUTTINGS

HERE are people who are perpetually curious to know what others are saying about them behind their backs. Whenever we meet them it does not take long for the conversation to drift in the direction of their preoccupation. "Somebody," remarks the person of this type, "told me the other day—I can't quite believe it—that Jones told a party at Smith's house that I was addicted to cocaine. Can he have said it, do you think?" You, liking everybody to be happy, and perhaps thinking Jones capable of saying almost anything when flown with insolence and wine, reply disingenuously that the report is ridiculous. "I'm sure," you say, "that he couldn't have said anything so absurd, except possibly as a joke." That doesn't get you out of it. "It didn't come to *me* as a joke. I wish you'd be honest with me. I'd much rather know precisely where I stand with people." If you have self-command, you continue to produce evasions and lies until you can change the subject; but too many people yield to temptation and proceed, under a catechism which they invite whilst pretending not to dislike it, to repeat all the backbitings they can remember. The questioner never really wants to hear that people have called him a fool or a bigamist, a bad artist or a sponger upon the public purse. Sometimes it is his vanity that makes him imagine perpetual conversations about himself and curious, at whatever cost, to get an inkling of them. Sometimes it is his self-distrust that leads him to be

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perpetually hunting for expressions of opinion that will buttress him up in his own esteem, the result of his searches usually being precisely the opposite. "What did he say about me? . . . You might as well tell me. . . . I can assure you I shan't mind." But usually they do mind.

But what is all this? you will ask. These moralisings may be true and even trite, but why do they appear here on a page supposed to have something to do with books and their authors? Reader, what you have just perused is a first paragraph. The essential thing about the art of writing an essay is that you should not plunge at once into the subject you intend to discuss. Lead the reader gradually to it. That way you will give him a surprise, and produce also the illusion that he has shared in a wandering train of thought. All the best essayists do it; many of them, I believe, do the beginnings of their essays last, and start them at as remote a point from the main theme as possible. Myself, I am forgetful, hasty, spontaneous, naturally candid and devoid of artifice. But I have remembered this time; even yet I have not reached my subject; I feel a certain, as I hope justifiable, pride in the achievement; and I trust I may be pardoned for calling the reader's attention to it. That first paragraph is by no means perfect; for it had, as will be seen, a direct relation with my subject. The subject wasn't actually mentioned; but a master of the mode would have begun with "Sir Walter Raleigh once said," or "When Layard was digging in the ruins of Nineveh," or "I was walking down Bishopsgate one day last week." Never mind; so far as it goes it is all right.

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And now for the subject proper, which impalpably dawns at this stage like the sun slipping out of the barred, low clouds of morning twilight. I conceive of authors who too avidly study their press-cuttings as in the same unfortunate position as those too curious listeners.

It all arose really out of a conversation with a man of genius, for whose character and art I have great respect. He told me that he was in the habit of reading his press-cuttings, and that sometimes they gave him acute pain and even kept him awake. People said such malicious things ; other people thoughtlessly said such unfair things. Why weren't people more amiable, more careful, more inclined to assume that they had no monopoly of decency, sense, and artistic ideals ? "Why on earth," I asked him, "do you subscribe to these things if they upset you ?" He couldn't exactly say. He had contracted the habit, and the habit had become a disease. He hoped he would have the resolution to break himself of it ; but he wasn't sure. Nor am I. I doubt if he will.

I have met a good many authors who have had this experience. I know several who refrain from buying press-cuttings and even from searching the papers for reviews of their own books. Some of them know that they will either be bored or irritated by the great majority of the references to their works ; others are frankly indifferent. No sensible person, I take it, is totally incurious about criticism of himself. Informed criticism is interesting, maybe useful, and, if favourable, warms the heart. But in point of fact I don't think that the author who refrains from

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the systematic collection of press-cuttings is likely to miss much that should really interest him. He and his friends will be in the habit of seeing most of the journals in which serious criticism is likely to appear ; everything really complimentary is pretty certain to be brought to his notice ; he will be lucky if accident or the well-meant effort of misguided acquaintance stops short at that. Even if a criticism of any seriousness appears in a local paper in the Orkneys, somebody—very likely the author of it—will probably draw his attention to it. If not, no harm is done : the main purpose of current criticism being to keep the public informed, not to give authors a happy or unhappy five minutes at breakfast. Let persons who are easily wounded check their morbid curiosity and leave press-cuttings alone. Nine reviews out of ten are not worth reading.

The one kind of man who should and will go on getting press-cuttings is the man who likes absurdities. I knew one signal example of this. I used to stay with him. Little pink bundles of cuttings arrived almost every morning. He would open them, unroll them, glance rapidly through them. The long commentaries from "serious" papers he would glance at, giving a grunt of satisfaction if they appeared to be good advertisements, but not reading them. He had his own opinion of his merits ; for the rest he was interested in the criticism of certain friends. But he would put aside anything grotesquely short and summary, any paragraphs from "gossip" columns, any reviews from very outlandish places, like Sligo or Kirkcaldy. These promised well, and he went through them closely. Every now and then

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he would laugh with great complacency and pass one across, for it contained something preposterous, some absurdly-worded laudation or quite extravagant abuse. And the pearls he would keep. The best out of many years' supply he had hung, mounted and framed, around his study. Over the desk were three portraits of other men with his own name falsely printed underneath them—mistakes made by newspapers. Dominant above the fireplace was a row of invectives: one provincial scribe had called him a pretentious ignoramus, and another a sinister cynic. He liked it. That is the kind of man for whom press-cuttings are worth while. The others, I think, would be far better off without them. It is not healthy for men to get into the way of hungering for notice and brooding over casual and ephemeral things said about them by Tom, Dick, or Harry.

ON KNOWING AUTHORS

I MET a man who said he had met another man. "I always thought," he said, "that he was one of the best people alive, but I found him disappointingly commonplace." I suggested, as unobtrusively as I could, that if the original conception was right the gentleman could not possibly be commonplace ; though it might be his natural habit or his whim to confine his conversation with strangers to commonplace topics. It wasn't the first time I've heard such a remark ; in fact, I have often heard would-be hero-worshippers say despondently that they are almost always disappointed in great men when they meet them. But what portents do they expect ?

You stand with an artist drinking cocktails at the American bar in the Royal Automobile Club, or you sit next to him at a dinner in the Fishmongers' Hall, or you meet him at an evening party in a friend's house, or you are introduced to him in the street. Those are the sort of encounters you have with a man whom you do not know very well. You talk about other people, whether they are nice, nasty, clever, foolish, generous, spiteful, ill, well, prosperous, or in difficulties ; or you exchange notes about Mr. Lloyd George ; or you discuss American prohibition ; or you ask each other if you have read "War and Peace," André Gide, or the posthumous novels of Henry James. Your conversation, in fact, is ordinary human conversation ; the poet or the romantic novelist or the metaphysician

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is as likely as anybody else to ask you what is going to win the Derby, why the Irish want separation, which is the best village in Cornwall for a family's summer holiday, or whether there is a chance that the medical profession will some day discover something about influenza. He will, assuming he does not live behind an impenetrable wall of silence, be at worst an ordinary talker and at best a brilliant one. But in the general way he will not be uncommonly profound or passionate or tender. This often leads people to say that they are disappointed in artists ; the men do not come up to their works. A little reflection will demonstrate that it is impossible that artists should lack qualities which are really present in their works.

I mean qualities of thought and feeling. A man may have the gift of literary and not the gift of vocal expression. Goldsmith "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll." The extreme instance would be a dumb man, who might nevertheless be the most eloquent of essayists. Some men talk as well as they write ; some better than they write ; some as they write ; and some differently. But nothing can come out of a man except what is there, and if you find a sympathetic heart in a man's writing which he does not show over the cocktails, it merely means that over the cocktails he is too reserved, proud, shy, preoccupied, or merely interested to show it. Keats, at the Burford Bridge Hotel, would not have talked to stray acquaintances in the strain of "Lone star, would I were stedfast as thou art"; even with his friends, or with Fanny Brawne in person, he would not be doing that all the time. Elderly

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memoirists still insist on describing Browning as "a red-faced diner out," and exclaiming at an apparent incompatibility between his conviviality and his poetry. This is mere lack of imagination. What you clearly have to do is to reconcile the two, to realise that men are many-sided, and that Browning was merely an unusually striking demonstration of the fact that men do not commonly show their deeper sides in public. The rubicund old gentleman who took Lady Edith down to dinner was not entirely absorbed in eating and gossiping ; he did not secrete poems unconsciously in his sleep. That morning he had been wrestling in prayer or harassed by the evil in the world ; even at moments amid the silk and silver and glass of the dinner-party there were intervals when, whilst his lips were bantering or chatting about Lord Granville or the Russians or the Royal Academy, he saw eternity through his surroundings, all the gaiety and the grandeur fading like a flower, or throbbed at the beauty of a remembered sea or ached with an old remembered grief.

And so your artist, if he really has something in him, when you meet him in the street, or at—it is possible—a croquet competition, or on the Dover-Ostend boat, or at a committee meeting of the Authors' Society. Do you expect him suddenly to buttonhole you and ask you if you are saved ? Do you expect him to go on his knees and pray, insist on calling your attention to the tints of his liqueurs, rhapsodise over lights and shadows, and confide in you the dreams of his first love, or of how he sweated last night when he faced the imminence of Death ?

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Certainly not. Yet it is of such things that art is made ; it is emotions and reflections of this nature which we ordinarily find in the art, and suppose, casually meeting him, not to exist in the artist who has put them there. Shakespeare, as we know, was obliged to spend part of his time signing deeds, arranging mortgages, and suing people for debt ; one can hear his contemporaries saying to each other, "How that fellow can have written 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow' beats me." The fact is that he wrote it, and that what in him it sprang from was present when he was in the Law Courts and present when he was at the Mermaid, being rebuked (*sufflaminandus erat*) by mutton-fisted Ben for excessively voluble high spirits.

The fact is that the mere routine of living takes most of our time, and that few men live with their hearts perpetually on their sleeves. An artist has at least his art for communication ; outside that he is only like the generality of mankind if he seldom shows his best and deepest sides. Even a sensitive man's most intimate friends will seldom get into so close a contact with him as one establishes at once if one reads a good book. There are moments when by imperceptible gradations two people—rarely more than two together—fall into confidences and unlock the secret thoughts, visions, and hankerings of years. We have all known such moments and we treasure the memory of them. It is, perhaps, as well that we do not systematically seek them ; anyhow, to the person of imagination they are not very necessary. Artist or not, there is always a man behind the mask. About the artist we have more information. That is

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why "character sketches" of business men or politicians are nearly always interesting, whereas "character sketches" of artists tell us nothing that we did not know already—tell us much less, in fact. For the artist himself has already told us everything that he has to say.

A RETURN

I HAVE been to America, my friendship to which country is now established on an even more solid, and liquid, basis than before. Going, I imagined that I should post a weekly essay from there ; if I may say so, without irreverence to that continent, my road to America was paved with good intentions ; but the moment I got into the Hudson and saw a grey silent mass in the distance of dawn, the congregation of high buildings on Manhattan, I knew I was doomed. There would, at any moment of the day or night, always be something more interesting to see than my own handwriting. But that may look as though I made a deliberate choice in the matter ; the truth being that I was a straw in the wind, and should have fulfilled, with the excitement of that country around me, no previously contracted obligations, however sacred, however lucrative even. My will abdicated and conscience went to sleep.

I may at least plead this, not as an excuse, but as something on the credit side : that I am not going to write a book about America. This is very unusual. So unusual that I found it to be incredible. Many Americans refused to believe me when I told them so ; after all I had been in the country six weeks. Oh, yes, I *could* write the book. I can see it all, on the model consecrated by generations of travelling men of letters. There would be the chapter on the voyage, the good ship "Dipsomania" leaving Liverpool, the strange faces of the foreign immigrants going to Eldorado, the community life in

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mid-Atlantic, the preliminary conversation with the shrewd and quiet American on the ship, conscious of all his country's problems, conversant with everything that had been said about them, opening out to a really sympathetic foreigner ; the Overture to the orchestral discussion which would come later, accustoming the reader's ears to all the principal motifs. Then, after this, would come the approach, the new chapter beginning " We entered the Hudson in the grey of morning," and containing remarks about the magnificence of New York harbour, the disappointing unimpressiveness of the Statue of Liberty, and the magnificence of the great group of Down Town skyscrapers, " Especially at night, when . . . "

The rest is all cut and dried. I could do that chapter on New York, with remarks on the latest architecture, the management of the traffic, the luxury of the shops, the frequency of Jews and Italians, the character of the theatres, the jolly splendours of the Great White Way, the strange fate of little old Trinity Church among the giant office buildings, the unpicturesque convenience of numbered streets, the glories of the Metropolitan Museum and certain private collections over which I was courteously shown by Mr. X and Mr. Y, and the traffic over Brooklyn Bridge, mingled with reflections on the existence, nature, and purpose of American hustling, the differences between New York and London papers, the extent to which American men and women are or are not better or more fashionably dressed than the inhabitants of London, and the question as to how much sleep the

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average New Yorker gets. Similar chapters or half-chapters would be devoted to Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, and Boston. The formulæ are all ready.

Philadelphia, although a city of two millions, still retains something of the dignity and gravity of an old Quaker town. Many of the streets have a distinct Colonial quality, and the big buildings are neither very numerous nor very tall. . . .

Washington is said by those who know it to be the pleasantest place in the world to live in. Dignified, reposeful, umbrageous, blessed with fine air and beautiful natural surroundings and possessing a permanent population which . . .

Chicago, to the man who has formed his ideas from "The Jungle," has a good many pleasant surprises. The stockyards do exist, and so do the slums and the immigrants. But the parks are . . . the principal shopping streets are . . . and above all the magnificent drive along the Lake Shore is . . . whilst the generosity of millionaire benefactors has . . . and the vast buildings of the new University are . . .

Boston, to some extent, keeps its character . . . Lowells . . . Lodges . . . Henry James . . . Harvard . . . But in our own time it has greatly expanded and it is now largely an Irish city . . . What Boston thinks of the rest of America . . . what the rest of America thinks of Boston. . . .

Memory, and a Baedeker, would soon, I think, make five thousand words apiece out of these. And then

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we should pass on : " I did not visit the West, but . . . "

How Conservative is the South ! What a riddle is the Middle West ! How remote is California and how peculiar her conditions ! In Charlestown they still remember General Lee and the injustices of Mr. Lincoln. In Cincinnati they are mainly Germans. That is all very straightforward, but we should be compelled at last, after our general impressionistic survey giving a rough idea of the vast variety of climates and social conditions, to come to certain specific subjects of debate. Without immodesty, I think I could do that chapter on the New Immigration. I should get—as lazy authors do not always get—some statistics ; but I should be quite on the approved lines in my remarks on the dangers of an unchecked flow, on the clash of cultures ; on the respective degrees to which various kinds of foreigners can be absorbed ; on the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon ; on the effect of the war and recent legislation upon the inflow from Central and Southern Europe, and on the systematic efforts at " Americanisation." Then the Colour Problem, the qualities of the negro, the impossibility of miscegenation, lynchings, Booker Washington and Du Bois, negro schools, Jim Crow cars, the Southern Darkie, the need for careful consideration of a question which has no apparent solution. Then the Economic Structure, wholesale agriculture and meat-raising, centralisation, specialisation, mass-production, trustification. Then Politics : Why respectable people seldom go into them, stories about graft, the spoils system, the police, city

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government and Tammany Hall—with some hopeful signs and the City Managers' plan. Then Education : Hundreds of Universities and hundreds of thousands of undergraduates ; the attempt to make an Educated Democracy—this is only a Beginning, at present the exceptional Individual is hardly catered for ; the need of an Honours System; Athletics, new buildings, the Harkness Quadrangle, libraries, benefactors. Then the Millionaires : Their endowments, their collections, their way of life, their power, the public attitude towards them, the various sorts of them. But why proceed ? Look at the chapter headings of twenty books about America, rapidly written by the rapidly peregrinating, and you will have a good idea of this unwritten book of mine. It would surely be so easy. And they might, if I were vivacious and fortunate, run it as a serial in the pages of a magazine.

Yet, if I had written that book, I think there might have been a few pages in it that would not have appeared in most of the others. I remember certain landscapes and certain small towns which I am not likely ever to forget—New England bound with ice ; Frankfort in its wooded gorge ; Charlottesville in Virginia, with the lovely Georgian quadrangle in a high valley among tree-covered conical hills, with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance ; Annapolis, with the grey Navy buildings reflected in the lagoon and behind them a perfect eighteenth-century town, quiet in the sunshine, streets of old brick houses radiating from the knoll on which stands the Augustan State House. The new things cannot be ignored, nor the multitudes ;

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problems we have and problems we must discuss ; but I cannot help wishing that some time or another an English traveller with leisure and sensibilities and a style should think it worth while to go through the East, or the South, or the West, or even the middle of the United States, as so many have gone through Sussex, France, the Rhineland, Italy, Spain, India, and Japan—looking for the beautiful, the amusing, the curious, the humane in landscapes and people, thinking of the individual and of the past more than of the crowd and the future, leaving sociology and anxiety to others.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA

I OPENED a book casually and began reading an essay on Frederic the Great of Prussia, once known to these islands as "The Protestant Hero," given a new vogue by Carlyle, but at present somewhat under a cloud owing to the perpetuation of the worst of his proclivities in his descendants. Suddenly I came upon a passage about his literary compositions ; certain of them were commended, but not his poems. " Nobody," ran the curt sentence, " can now read his verses."

How rash such statements are ! It would hardly be safe to assert that nobody can now read Rollin, Sir Richard Blackmore, or the encyclopædia of Vincent of Beauvais. " Very few can read . . ." " it is not easy to conceive that anybody can read . . . , " " the man must have plenty of time to waste who reads . . . , " " he must be an eccentric fool who reads . . . : all these openings would be quite safe in reference to hosts of old books. But the man who confidently writes " nobody can now read " does so at his risk. As I saw those dogmatic words my soul uprose in pride. " I can," it said, " and, what's more, I have." The answer was accurate and complete. I once read Frederic's poems, I found a mild pleasure in reading them, and I have now, under this adventitious incentive, been looking at them again.

I don't mean to say that I hunted for them, or that I wasn't happy until I got them. I could have lived my life quite at my ease without ever catching

THE KING OF PRUSSIA

a glimpse of them. It was pure accident that brought into my hands a copy of Frederic's poems, and I should probably never have looked at them had I not possessed a copy of my own. I picked it up in the sixpenny box of a bookseller who did not know them for what they were, as there is no author's name on the title-page. The book is rather remarkable. The title is "Poesies Diverses," and the edition was published in Berlin in 1760 by Christian Frederic Voss. The royal author, or his publisher, spared no expense. The volume is a handsome quarto, gilt edged ; the paper is good and the print handsome ; and the pages are embellished with decorations on the best French models of the time. It was the great age of copper-plate pictures, and the German artists, Meil and Schmidt, did their Teutonic best to follow in the footsteps of the French masters. The frontispiece is a full-page engraving of a nude and bearded person with vast thews, sitting on a rock at a cave's entrance, and contemplatively playing a seven-stringed lyre. There are tailpieces full of musical instruments, goddesses, cupids, clouds, clarions, and Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses languorously reclining amid sylvan bowers, and there are really charming initials everywhere. But where the artist—in this instance, Schmidt—really laid himself out (no doubt, under instruction) was in the big series of engravings illustrating *L'Art de la Guerre*. The armoured prince is shown in every stage of operation. He is crowned with laurel, he is girded by Bellona, he directs an attack on a town amid a hail of large cannon-balls, he examines a map, he surveys his hosts from a hill, he leads them

ESSAYS AT LARGE

into a city, and he reclines on a sofa with his spouse, whilst his young prattlers pull off his boots. And this, on the whole, is Frederic's most interesting poem.

He wrote twenty epistles and a number of odes, including some addressed to Gresset, Maupertius, and Voltaire, whom he addresses as

Fils d'Apollon, Homere de la France.

They all have a certain flavour of personality about them, but it is in the art of war that one naturally finds most piquancy, and it is the most ambitious of Frederic's efforts. It is in six cantos ; a sort of solemn, extended monologue, full of scraps of history, sketches of operations, and elevated sentiments. A certain amount is talked about glory. It comes into the peroration, and it comes at the beginning, where the "young Prince" is exhorted :

écoutez les leçons d'un soldat,
Qui formé dans les camps, nourri dans les allarmes,
Vous appelle à la Gloire, et vous instruit aux armes.

But Frederic is not to be taken as a militarist. He has seen too much of "ces ravages sanglans," and he urges the General to control his soldiers, and calls maledictions on the cruel commander who plunders and ravages and permits wanton carnage. No :

Je ne vous offre point Attila pour modèle ;
Je veux un Heros juste, un Tite, un Marc Aurele . . .
Tombent tous les lauriers du front de la Victoire,
Plutôt que l'injustice en ternisse la gloire.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA

It is extraordinary how Attila seems to haunt the Hohenzollern imagination.

Frederic's poems are certainly prosaic as a rule. But they are not alone in their dullness in that century, and they are less dull than some ; I don't find Armstrong's "Art of Preserving Health," once so celebrated, as lively. Frederic wrote the uninspired, argumentative discourses and the formal apostrophes common in his time both in France and England. His collected works in verse and prose fill many volumes ; the prose is said to be good, and the reasoning sometimes acute. Whatever the literary value of his work, I imagine that he was the most prolific writer who has ever sat on a European throne. "A long time ago the world began"; Marcus Aurelius was a great writer, and I dare say the compositions of King Alfred were very remarkable for their period. But royal poets since then have been more numerous than fertile ; and we may fairly say that, with the exception of James I of Scotland, who wrote the "King's Quair," no modern sovereign has taken the job of writing verse more seriously. In fact, to the best of my remembrance—though I am rather hazy about all the Stanislases and Wenceslases of the old Polish and Bohemian realms—there is no near rival to him.

Certainly our own English monarchs do not compete. A few verses apiece are ascribed to many of them. *Cœur de Lion* is reputed to have written a Provençal song lamenting that he had spent two winters unransomed in prison ; possibly he got Blondel to write it for him. To Edward II is ascribed a Latin poem complaining of his lot, and to Henry VI

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an English one on the theme, “Kingdoms are but cares,” and there are some grounds for ascribing to Henry VIII a group of lyrics. The best is “Pastime with Good Company.” There is also one beginning :

As the holly groweth green,
And never changeth hue,
So am I, and ever have been,
Unto my lady true.

I can only say that if he really wrote that and read it to his courtiers, they must have found it rather difficult to control their faces. Edward VI is credited with a longish poem arguing about the Eucharist, and his sister Elizabeth with several vigorous lyrics, including one about Mary Queen of Scots, “the daughter of debate that discord aye doth sow.” Of James VI and I, the British Solomon, there is no doubt. He published two volumes of verse, one of which (1584) was called “The Essays of a Prentise,” and his collected works in verse and prose were published in 1616. If only his sonnets were as racy as his “Counterblast to Tobacco,” they would be worth having. Charles II, if he really wrote “I Pass All My Hours,” which has been imputed to him, would have employed himself well in writing more. With the Stuarts our literary monarchs apparently ended ; the poems of George III and William IV, if they wrote any, have never seen the light.

JOHN POMFRET

NOBODY knows everything or remembers everything he has known. If you talk long enough to the most learned of literary men you will find—in the end—some quite unexpected gap in his erudition. But I must say that I was more than ordinarily surprised to find Mr. Maurice Hewlett saying that he hadn't heard of Pomfret. Mr. Hewlett is writing on James Lackington, the celebrated cheap bookseller of a century ago. Pomfret one would have supposed to be far more widely known than Lackington ; he gets space of a sort in all the literary histories, whereas Lackington's delicious Memoirs are the private pastime of a few explorers like Mr. Hewlett, who knows English and French memoir-literature inside-out. Mr. Hewlett's precise words are :

“ Pomfret’s Poems ” inspire little enthusiasm in me who, I am sorry to say, know nothing of them or their Pomfret.

Well, time was when Pomfret’s “ Choice ” was known to every Englishman who read verse.

John Pomfret, son of the Vicar of Luton, was born in 1667 and educated at Queens’ College, Cambridge. In 1695 he became Vicar of Maulden, in Bedfordshire, and in 1702 transferred to Millbrook. He married in 1692. In 1703 he died, and his death is supposed to have been hastened by a very unfortunate contretemps. At the end of his celebrated poem he wrote :

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Would bounteous Heaven once more indulge, I'd
choose

(For who would so much satisfaction lose
As witty nymphs in conversation give)
Near some obliging modest fair to live.

.

To this fair creature I'd sometimes retire,
Her conversation would new joys inspire.

.

And as I near approach the verge of life,
Some kind relation (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
While I did for a better world prepare.

When Pomfret (who had been married for years) applied to Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, for institution to a fat living (he already had two) to which he had been presented, enemies or fools represented to the Bishop that this passage was immoral. It implied, they said, that Pomfret thought concubinage preferable to marriage. The Bishop, a weak man, listened to this slander. Pomfret hastened to London to dispel it. In London he caught small-pox, and he died from it.

Pomfret's poems appeared in 1699. "The Choice" at once overshadowed all its companions. The "Poems" as a collection had reached their tenth edition in 1736, but "The Choice" was continually reprinted by itself, in anthologies and otherwise. Four quarto editions of it appeared in the single year 1701. Dr. Johnson said "Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener pursued

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than Pomfret's 'Choice.' " In 1807 (Pomfret still, and for years after that, was being reprinted) Southey asked " Why is Pomfret the most popular of the English poets ? The fact is certain, and the solution would be useful." Campbell, eleven years after, according to Birkbeck Hill, " thus criticised this statement : It might have been demanded with equal propriety, why London Bridge is built of Parian marble." But some years had passed ; the romantic age had begun ; and the evidence of Johnson, the bookseller's son, is certainly not contradicted by the experience of one who rummages amongst the secondhand bookshops of to-day.

Granted that " The Choice " was the most popular, at any rate one of the most popular of English poems (amongst the crowd, be it understood) Southey's question is not difficult to answer. " He who pleases many," said Johnson, " must have some species of merit." He described Pomfret's merits thus :

His " Choice " exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions and equal to common expectations ; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. . . . In his other poems he has an easy volubility ; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous or entangled with intricate sentiment.

The common sentiments were much the same as those expressed in another (and a far better) popular poem of the same era, Dr. Walter Pope's " The

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Old Man's Wish." Our young clergyman sat down and imagined how, given a free hand, he would arrange the rest of his life. Almost everybody has done it. Pomfret did it honestly, and, in so doing it, naturally reflected the desires of a great many other people. "Blissful ease and satisfaction" was his aim ; no crowded hours of glorious life for Pomfret. He would have, near a town, "a private seat, built uniform, not little nor too great." The desired landscape is described ; the furniture shall not be gaudy ; there shall be "a silent study" looking out on a lime tree avenue and a river. All the best authors will be on the shelves, and the poet's mornings will be spent "in pleasing, useful studies." He will have an estate large enough to have a margin for the poor and the occasional obliging of a friend. His table will be healthy, but not luxurious, and :

I'd have a little vault, but always stor'd
With the best wines each vintage could afford.
Wine whets the wit, improves its native force,
And gives a pleasant flavour to discourse :

We come next to his friends. He will have two :

whose company would be
A great advance to my felicity.

They are to be well born, discreet, knowing books and men, "brisk in gay talking, and in sober, grave," "close in dispute, but not tenacious," "not quarrelsome, but stout enough to fight." And then we come to the faithful female friend, whose character is described extraordinarily well. A quietly

JOHN POMFRET

varied life, free from lawsuits ; a ripe old age ; a peaceful death :

And when committed to the dust, I'd have
Few tears, but friendly, dropt into my grave.

“ The Choice ” has still sufficient charm to be worth reading, although in this age nobody even dreams of enjoying a quiet life.

Some of Pomfret's lesser poems are extremely weak and dull. The best of them is perhaps a neat address “ To a Friend Inclined to Marry.” Moderation in all things is the counsel of this as it is the keynote of “ The Choice ” ; and a taste for cosiness is again strongly manifested. The last lines run :

Her fortune competent ; and, if thy sight
Can reach as far, take care 'tis gathered right.
If thine's enough, then her's may be the less ;
Do not aspire to riches in excess.
For that which makes our lives delightful prove,
Is a genteel sufficiency and love.

We may charitably suppose that he put the “ sufficiency ” before the love for the convenience of his rhyme. But “ love and a genteel sufficiency ” is a delightful Augustan modification of “ love in a cottage.”

CANDID BIOGRAPHY

“ **W**HO’S WHO ” and “ The Literary Year Book ” are not such modern institutions as you might think or as I thought until the other day. I noticed in a catalogue, and at once bought for too large a price, a work, one hundred and five years old. The title-page is open before me. I will transcribe its text, as it illustrates rather well how our manner of expressing ourselves has altered. The modern equivalent of such a work would be given some such name as “ The Author’s Who’s Who ” or “ A Directory of Living Writers.” But in the year after Waterloo this is how they put it—and in a variety of types, small and large, roman, italic, and gothic, which I am not going to distract my printers by attempting to reproduce :

A
BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY
OF THE
LIVING AUTHORS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
COMPRISING
Literary Memoirs and Anecdotes of Their Lives;
AND A
CHRONOLOGICAL REGISTER OF THEIR PUBLICATIONS,
WITH THE NUMBER OF EDITIONS PRINTED,
INCLUDING
*Notices of Some Foreign Writers Whose Works Have
Been Occasionally Published in England,*

CANDID BIOGRAPHY

illustrated by

A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATIONS

From Persons of the First Eminence in the
WORLD OF LETTERS.

LONDON.

PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN,

Public Library, Conduit Street, Hanover Square.
1816.

There follows a dedication to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, in which his attention to the Arts is respectfully commended and the influence of Britain in the world is described in Johnsonian periods culminating in “Thus have Morals and Letters consecrated what Victory has achieved and Commerce extended.” Paraphrased this comes to “Trade follows the Flag, and Morals and Letters follow Trade.” But let us hasten on.

The Preface gives the reasons for such a publication and supplies, incidentally, the very astonishing information that the most important previous guide to living British authors had been published in German, in Berlin, by a Gottingen Professor. We then come to the first of four hundred and fifty large pages full of biographies, an extraordinary monument of erudition. Virtually everybody who had ever written a book was included; even the obscurest curate who had let slip a pamphlet sermon in Exeter or Lichfield has his line or two giving his college and degree. The first name is that of Mr. Speaker Abbott (afterwards Lord Colchester) who, on the strength of three legal treatises, is given a full

length biographical summary, which tells us, for example, that he was born "about 1755," and was once Lieutenant-Colonel of the North Pevensey Legion of Volunteer Cavalry. Anster Abbott was the author of "Flora Bedfordiensis," and the other gentlemen on page one include a mineralogist, two sermonising clergymen, a legal expert, Dr. Abernethy, and a Dr. Adair, whose numerous works include "Unanswerable Objections Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade" (he had a job in the West Indies) and a boldly intituled work, "Essays on Fashionable Diseases," 8vo, 1790. These specimens attest the scope of the work ; but how were the really great men then living treated ?

Shelley and Keats were not before the public, and Jane Austen was still anonymous, but we may make a fair test with Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Leigh Hunt, Lamb, Landor, Peacock, Crabbe, Hogg, and Campbell. The first two, already popular, came off fairly well, though nothing like so well as Sheridan, to whose complicated career pages are devoted. Scott, Walter, Esq., is described as "one of the clerks of the Court of Session, and Sheriff Deputy for the Shire of Selkirk." Figures of his sales are "subjoined," and under the account of Byron we find this rough, rude sentence :

It is remarkable that the two first poets of the age should both have been lame from their infancy ; yet such is the case with Lord Byron and Mr. Walter Scott.

But what of those who are now considered greater

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poets ? Well, here is Wordsworth's biography, all he gets :

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, Esq., late of St. John's College, at Cambridge, and at present distributor of stamps for the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland. This gentleman stands at the head of a particular school of poetry, the characteristic of which is simplicity. His publications are. . . .

And all they have to say of Coleridge is :

COLERIDGE, S. T., a native of Bristol and formerly a member of Jesus College, Cambridge. When the late Sir Alexander Ball was appointed Governor of Malta, Mr. C. went with him in quality of Secretary. He has latterly been engaged in reading lectures on Poetry and the Belles Lettres, and has published :

There is no evident malice in this ; merely lack of understanding. As for Blake, he is described as " an eccentric but very ingenious artist, formerly of Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, afterwards living at Feltham, in Sussex, and principally the engraver and publisher of his own designs."

There is no literary criticism in the account of Leigh Hunt, which ends :

His last speculation was successful, owing to the virulence of its politics, which brought upon him a prosecution for a libel against the Prince Regent, and he is now in confinement in the New Gaol, Horsemonger Lane.

There is a slight touch of pleasure about this. It is, in fact, everywhere evident that the compilers, although they do not resort to boycott, object to extreme politicians. Radical journalists are continually described as "persons," other biographees being usually "gentlemen," and a long life of Cobbett contains the statement that the success of the *Weekly Register*,

notwithstanding the monotonous political tergiversation and occasional coarseness of the author, has raised Mr. C. to affluence, and enabled him to purchase a valuable estate, at Botley, in Hampshire.

Charles Lamb is dismissed with four lines and a list of works ; they know nothing of him except that "he is at present a clerk in the India House," and was at Christ's Hospital. Landor has three lines, which seem to suggest that his career is over. Peacock (who had as yet published only three poorish books) is one of the minority about whom not one biographical fact is given. The Ettrick Shepherd is given a few friendly words, and Crabbe is commended as "deservedly one of the most distinguished poets of the present day." Of Campbell little is said except that he was given a pension by Lord Grenville for writing political paragraphs. Southey's early revolutionism is decried, but it is handsomely observed that :

In 1813 he succeeded Mr. Pye as Poet Laureate, and it must be admitted that, with some slight

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exceptions, his subsequent performances are such as do credit to the appointment.

Hazlitt, as yet unknown as a critic, is barely mentioned.

Whatever the critical references of the work nobody could say it was not lively. Here are a few characteristic entries :

WILDE, JOHN, Esq., F.R.S., and Professor of Civil Law in the University of Edinburgh. . . . Unfortunately his professional and literary career was closed by a sudden mental derangement which, becoming incurable, he was confined in a private receptacle for lunatics, but out of respect, however, to his talents, he was still suffered to retain nominally his professorship of civil law, and Mr. Irving, the acting lecturer, is obliged to allow him half the salary.

WILLIAMS, HELEN MARIA. This celebrated lady has recently published a volume which, if it does not completely atone for the bad qualities of her former works, will at least entitle her to respect.

MEEKE, MRS. One of the numerous family of novelists whose prolific genius is always labouring to increase the stock of the circulating libraries. Her performances are . . .

SHIRREFS, ANDREW, M.A., a bookbinder at Aberdeen, who has lost the use of both of his legs.

YATE, WALTER HONYWOOD, Esq., late of St. John's College, Oxford, a Justice of the Peace, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Gloucester. This gentleman, though a great enemy to

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public corruption, and a zealous advocate for Parliamentary reform, was, a few years since, divorced at the suit of his wife, on a charge of adultery and cruelty. He has published . . .

How much brighter "Who's Who" would be if its biographies were built on this model.

REJECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

EDITORS are a variegated lot. Dan Leno was once an editor, so was Mr. C. B. Fry ; I have been an editor myself, and amongst my friends there is an editor who is a man with a soft heart. He was exchanging experiences with me this week. He said, and I commended him for it, that he always made a point of himself reading all manuscripts submitted to him.

This is more virtuous than some people might imagine. It might, at first sight, seem obvious that all manuscripts should be read, and all manuscripts would be read, by the person who solicited them and was nominally responsible for selecting the best among them. Ideally, the practice is certainly desirable, and an enthusiast will struggle hard to live up to the ideal. But a little reflection will bring the realisation that to anybody but an enthusiast there is a great temptation to be slack about it, and that even the enthusiast encounters very disheartening obstacles. A man may be extremely keen not to overlook anything worth the printing, and anxious to assist promising and obscure authors, but it takes a lot of disinterested interest and much patience to plough through a daily pile of manuscripts from outside contributors. For many of them are written in difficult hands, many are long articles or stories which are patently intelligent and must be read right through before their merits can be finally estimated, and even of them those which are really suitable for publication in the paper to which they

are sent bear a very small proportion to the whole. I cannot say offhand what proportion. But judging from my own experience of papers which have searched their posts with the utmost eagerness for acceptable work and have been swamped with manuscripts from an educated public, I should say that the accepted or acceptable poems or articles or stories cannot amount to one in a hundred of the unsolicited manuscripts sent in. It is, I gladly agree, worth it. The person who encourages the one in a hundred may be doing excellent service to literature, which is what literary journalists profess to be there for. But it is Serbonian work and the novelty of it soon wears off, as the expectation of miracles fades and the consciousness of probabilities grows.

Some unsolicited manuscripts are mad, some are hopelessly feeble, most are merely amateurishly incompetent. They are probably written by persons who never get into print and whose spark seldom flickers into manuscript. Writers of very occasional poems or stories number thousands, probably hundreds of thousands. An editor in the course of a year will receive great drifts of poems from persons whom he knows and whom he never suspected of writing verses, and who probably conceal their proclivities from their friends pending their recognition by acceptance. These no doubt feel slightly damped—anybody must—when they are turned down with a printed rejection form or even with a friendly, wriggling, disingenuous letter in which laboured compliments and excuses form a very diaphanous covering for the extremely bare fact of rejection. It is a beastly thing, to an imaginative man, this job of

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systematically throwing cold water on people's aspirations.

On a certain summer evening, when the sky is still green in the west, twenty men and women, greybeards, youths, girls with bobbed hair, march out (or send out) to pillar-boxes with long envelopes addressed to a certain periodical. The envelope goes into the red jaws, it sticks, it is pushed, it falls plop upon the imagined pile inside, it is irretrievable, and the author goes home wondering what is going to happen this time. A week passes or a month, and then one morning twenty people who have half-forgotten or who live in a perpetual fever of remembrance come down to twenty breakfast-tables to find lying there twenty envelopes addressed in the well-known hands of the recipients. Gloom settles over them. Some have doubts about their own abilities. All have doubts about the abilities, or the honesty, or the carefulness, or the human decency of the editor who has spurned them. It is in an editor's power to give any one of them an hour's happiness (not to mention a guinea or two) or an hour's unhappiness. How hard a choice to make.

I am depressed when I think of any rejected contributor, but I am depressed most of all when I think of the frequently and perennially rejected. The most curious tribe of habitual authors in this country are those who are known only to editors. There are several men in London, a lady in Macclesfield, another in Exeter, whose handwritings, styles, and manners of thought are as well known to half-a-dozen London editors as those of Mr. Conrad, Mr. Arnold Bennett, and Mr. Kipling. They enjoy, or

rather they do not enjoy, a kind of subterranean fame. The neighbours of Mr. Noah Davis, of Edgbaston, may or may not know that he writes, but they know him chiefly as a bank clerk or a schoolmaster who is interested in books and wears his hair a little longer than is customary. But in five or six rooms in Fleet Street or Bedford Street, Strand, or the Adelphi nothing is known about him personally except his inmost self, his ambitions, his ideals, his conception of what he can do, his beliefs about love and religion, his vocabulary, his rhythm, and (as I said) his handwriting. There are men, very likely, who have never seen his face, but who have seen his handwriting two or three hundred times. Nothing deters him. On Monday his poem on "A Level Crossing at Night" goes back to him, and on Thursday arrives his article on "The Organisation of the Provincial Theatre." Pertinacity like that took Columbus to America, and it will take Mr. Davis nowhere. He cannot know it himself, but everybody who ever sees his work knows it. Nevertheless, he plugs on. "They haven't got accustomed to my thought yet," he reflects, "but even these pudding-heads will see light in time." Back comes the last thing. There is another ready and away it goes. "Dear Sir, I beg to enclose a manuscript entitled Dash, which I hope you will find suitable for publication. If you are unable to use it would you kindly return it. Stamped and addressed envelope enclosed."

Unfortunate Mr. Davis of Edgbaston. Poor Colonel Doggins of Richmond. Sorely-tried Miss Martha Jiminy of Penzance. Gallant but misguided Edgar Chalkhill of Wimbledon, so young, so keen,

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so immature, so patently incapable of maturity ! Some of them keep return envelopes on which their addresses are printed ; whether to impress or to save the labour of writing I do not know. But every morning on the desks of which I am thinking a communication from at least one of their brotherhood reposes. It will be looked at with a weary eye, and it will go the way of all its predecessors. For the manuscripts of some authors are like homing pigeons. You may release them wherever you like, but they will make straight back for the familiar cote.

AN INDIAN BARD

JESTING at the expense of Baboo English is easy, and it may be done in the wrong spirit. Our own undergraduates, if called on to write essays in Urdu or Tamil, would beyond doubt equal the best efforts of Jabberjee, B.A., and I doubt if many of us would be sufficiently enterprising (granted that India was occupying England) to attempt to compose poetry in the tongues of Hindustan. There is always a something of admiration mingled with my amusement when I see the metrical efforts of our Indian fellow-subjects. At the same time, it is no good disguising the amusement—since, humanly speaking, it is impossible that the gentlemen who awake it will ever be aware of it—and it cannot be denied that the English compositions of Indians occasionally surpass the worst that our native versifiers can ever perpetrate. I remember copying out some time ago a remarkable quatrain I had found in a volume from Madras. It ran :

In ancient days ere Britons ruled our Ind,
No man but mocked at Life, at Honour grinned,
But now benignant British banners have swiftly
brought
Security of life and pelf and freedom of Thought.

Well, a correspondent, out of the goodness of his heart, has now sent me a book every page of which is on that level.

AN INDIAN BARD

Its title is "Priceless Pearls," a good enough beginning. Its author was Mr. A. S. H. Hosain, and it was published at Calcutta in 1890. There is a dedication to Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley, at that time Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. Sir Steuart was honoured with what the native printer termed a "Dedicatory Epitile" in verse. These are two verses from it :

Though Ind has thinned thy stature tall
The Lion's heart and soul is there.
There is the noblest human blood,
May'st thou enjoy the Lion's share.

With hopeful and with heart sincere
To thee, my work I dedicate.
With Lion's clemency I hope
My humble aim thou will not hate.

After which we come to the main part of the book, a long poem on the Nativity of the Prophet.

This is full of delightful quatrains, but I prefer to quote from the shorter poems which follow it, notably from that on the Cuckoo. We have had celebrated poems on the Cuckoo ourselves, and they are not notably good. The best known, which has crept into most of the anthologies, begins :

Bird of the wilderness
Blithesome and cumberless,

a couplet which, I believe, had it occurred in a work by a Baboo would have been treated as a rich example of comic English. But we cannot really vie

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with Mr. Hosain. This is his equivalent of “ blithe-some and cumberless ” :

Great Natures’ wonder great art thou.
Thy exterior greatly doth belie
The beauty and the solid worth
Of thy interior noble high.

Thou lover sweet of rural seat.
Thy choicest home is Mangoe tree ;
Whence thou let’s flow thy music sweet
With mirthfulness and cheerfulness and glee.

Some of the lines that follow are normal and straightforward, such as “ There is no Autumn in thy year ” and “ Whoever saw thee in the nest ? ” : but the former is adapted from “ There is no Winter in thy year ” in Michael Bruce’s “ Cuckoo, ” and one hardly believes that the latter is not also borrowed. But he does not remain normal for long, and he finishes with this triumphal burst :

Thy birth is sure celestial birth ;
The crows as such in reverence hold
Thee, Cuckoo dear, though wicked most
They are and most audacious bold.

Thou mystery-shop, what art thou, say ;
Why art thou Spring’s companion sweet ?
Would I could fly with sable wings,
And be thy sweet associate meet.

The cuckoo has been called many things, but never before a mystery-shop.

AN INDIAN BARD

A long elegy on his wife contains much genuine feeling. Sometimes the tropes seem very odd in English :

My eyes responded to her eyes.
Four rivers flowed their rapid course,
And when they dried I asked her why
Her rivers flowed with immense force.

But in places the language becomes simple and straightforward under the stress of emotion, and some of the stanzas remain affecting in English, such as :

O God ! I do not Houris want
To comfort me in Paradise.
Give me my purest Sara there ;
How splendid were my Sarah's eyes.

These simple passages, however, do not occur in the political and ceremonial poems, where rhetoric and ornament are deemed suitable, and are freely employed with astonishing results. The poet was a strong supporter of the British connection. He told his fellow-countrymen :

On England's icy bosom dear
Your sleepless, restless heads ye lay

—as if they were champagne. In a Jubilee ode to Queen Victoria he expands this theme, and contrasts the British raj with the despotism of Russia and “ the hideous hand of Polish bear ” :

ESSAYS AT LARGE

Thou dost not choke our voice, our Empress dear
Thou dost not smother free thought's babes at all
We full enjoy our Religion's soothing balm,
And with thy fetters, us, thou dost not gall.

The best of the many priceless pearls is probably the “Ode to Abul Munsur Iskandar Ali, Son of the Hon’ble Mr. Ameer Ali, Judge of the High Court, Calcutta.” It begins :

Rise sacred Music and sing a song
Of noble and of glorious birth
Of Mr. Ameer Ali’s child,
The brightest jewel on the earth.

It certainly must have been a remarkable child, for :

Sweet child ! thy father’s image high,
Thou art thy mother’s image too.

This was a pretty good feat to start a career with, unless his parents strongly resembled each other.

It is no good my recommending this book to readers, as I do not think there is the slightest chance of any reader being able to obtain it, with whatever effort. And, unfortunately, I cannot quote the whole of it. I can only make one more extract. It comes from a romantic night piece in which the author saw a flock of strange singing birds, one of which came down, “and on my chest its feathers spread.” All Nature was peaceful ; every prospect pleased :

It was the month of Ashshin sweet,
And Ganges was full to the brim.
The gentle breeze was blowing nice.
And Nature’s face was without grime.

AN INDIAN BARD

It is a pity that nobody can compile an anthology of such masterpieces. Nobody can, because the authors' permission would be required where works are still in copyright, and it would be impossible to explain to them (or, honourably, to conceal from them) the object with which the collection was being made.

A TRICK OF MEMORY

I MADE a slip and blush to find it fame. A fortnight ago I happened to be writing about an Indian poem on the cuckoo. In parenthesis I referred to the well-known poem beginning :

Bird of the wilderness
Blithesome and cumberless,

and said, unthinkingly, that it was an apostrophe to the cuckoo. It was really addressed to the skylark. Needless to say, an admirer of the poem popped up with a letter to the editor denouncing me as an ignoramus. I'm not quite sure that it was my *lapsus calami* which chiefly annoyed this correspondent. What he really disliked was the fact that I had laid rude hands on one of his favourite poems. Of this I do not repent. I admire the author of the poem, and I admire parts of the poem itself. But "cumberless" appears to me a very cumbersome word ; a word even more inappropriate to the lark than to the cuckoo. I don't mind betting that had I or any poor contemporary addressed the lark as "cumberless" not one person but a hundred people would write letters of criticism couched in the harshest terms. I maintain that "blithesome and cumberless" is an abominable line. But in so doing I am not attempting to draw a red herring across the main trail, or to lead readers into the delusion that I have answered the charge levelled against me of having stated that the bird in that poem was a cuckoo. The bird was not a cuckoo. It

A TRICK OF MEMORY

was a lark. I said it was a cuckoo. I was a cuckoo for saying it. I noticed the error when too late. I went red in the face when the mistake was exposed by that irate correspondent. And I went red all over when it was given a still wider publicity, put in the pillory and exposed to the eggs and carrots of the world, by *Punch*.

However, I shall survive. I do not take lapses of the pen, the tongue, or the memory, very seriously. I should not like to pepper every page I ever write with errors of fact. But I am resigned to their occasional occurrence, and I am as charitable to them in others as I wish others to be when I make them myself. There are errors and errors. If I stated boldly that "Hamlet" was written in prose and in bad prose, it would be obvious either that my mind had so weakened that I ought to post straight off to Harley Street, or else that I had never read the play but was pretending to have read it. A Scotch paper once perpetrated a sentence which was stuffed full of the sort of errors which really do deserve condemnation and should permanently disfranchise their perpetrators in the critical sphere. It was re-viewing a Selection from the poems of Francis Thompson, and said :

We do not think that any selection from the work of the Author of the "Seasons" can be considered really representative which contains no extracts from his best-known poem, "The City of Dreadful Night."

Had I written that and been exposed I really should hide a head not ordinarily "diminished," but

shrunken to the size of a hazel-nut. But surely, surely, my poor error was not of that kind ? Surely I may advance, and with more cogency than she could, the defence of the maid-servant in " Mid-shipman Easy " that her offspring was " only a very little one " ? And above all it was on the subject of the cuckoo, the bird of mocking, the feathered leg-puller, whose note in our Elizabethan literature is always an ironic echo, the bird which evoked what perhaps was the most masterful definition in our language. I am in the company of the unfortunate wight who, quite without meaning it, said that " the cuckoo is a bird which does not lay its own eggs." And I am in a larger company than that. I do not know that I ever heard a story about a cuckoo, a story in which the word " cuckoo " occurred, the point of which was not some ridiculous blunder. There is, for example, the story (there always is) about the curate. He was invited to an immense house-party at a duchess's. At tea on the afternoon of his arrival he did not speak ; his nervousness was painfully evident. Nor did he speak during the interval between tea and dinner. Nor during dinner could the assistance of two charming neighbours and the auxiliary resources of his anxious hostess produce from him anything but blushes and nervous tremblings. When the meal was over the ladies prolonged their stay for the sake of helping him to start. At last hope was given up ; but just as the hostess was rising his mouth was observed to be shaping itself towards some end, and there was a hasty resettlement. All listened anxiously, endeavouring to mask their painfully solicitous concentration.

A TRICK OF MEMORY

At last he broke the silence. "The c-c-cuckoo," he said, "is a m-much larger bird than you would s-s-suppose." There is also the story of the tearful child who brought back the cuckoo clock with the bitter complaint that it ood before it cucked.

I made a mistake. But the wind that blew in was not altogether evil in its effects. For I have finished considerably less ignorant than I started. Not about poetry, but about cuckoos. For in the course of composing this explanation I resorted to the dictionaries, and dictionaries always leave one richer. I began with all the foreign names of the cuckoo—coucou, kokkux, cuculus, kokild, kuckuk, koekoek. I then learnt (though this I fear I shall not retain) that the Cuculidæ are zygodactyl and desmognathous. But then I came to the slang definition: "a fool," "a gowk." It suddenly occurred to me: if I look up "gowk" shall I simply see "a cuckoo," "a fool"? So I looked up "gowk," and found to my intense astonishment that it originally actually meant a cuckoo, being derived from the Icelandic name for the bird. How many people who call other people gowks know that they are calling them cuckoos? This is a fact worth making mistakes for. The rest are not quite so thrilling, and I have no space to tabulate them all. But it is something to have started, or added to, one's store of erudition concerning the cuckoo-bee, the cuckoo-falcon, the cuckoo-fly, the cuckoo-shrike, cuckoo-spit (also known as toad-spittle and frog-spit). I turn the page and come to cucumber mildew and the cucumber flea beetle. Good-bye, I am going to spend the evening with the letter "C."

PRIZE POEMS

PEOPLE may often be heard saying that no poet of any merit, and no poem of any merit, was ever known to win the Newdigate at Oxford or the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge. This is not precisely true ; it wants as much qualification as that other common generalisation which has it that Senior Wranglers " never do anything in after life." It is true that these contests do not greatly excite good poets, and that the examiners do not always know a good poet when they see one. Rupert Brooke was defeated on the solitary occasion in which he entered for the Cambridge bays, and Swinburne failed to carry off the Newdigate with his eloquent periods on the last voyage of Sir John Franklin. Yet a fair number of the eminent literary men who passed through Oxford and Cambridge during the nineteenth century entered and won. Matthew Arnold carried off the Newdigate with a poem on " Cromwell," and Oscar Wilde won with his " Ravenna" ; and at Cambridge the early prize-men included Tennyson, Praed and Lord Lytton, not to mention persons (such as, in our own time, Professor Pigou and Mr. Lytton Strachey) whose later works have not been classifiable as imaginative literature.

And, as I remarked, the poems themselves are not always bad. Only one line from a Prize poem has become a common quotation, namely, Dean Burgon's (Oxford) description of Petra as :

A rose-red city half as old as time.

PRIZE POEMS

But there are a fair number of whole poems which can still be read without tedium, much less nausea. I will not go so far as to say that Praed's "Australasia" (of which I am happy to possess a Senate House Copy, 1823) was a masterpiece, but there was genuine feeling in it. The associations of names change. Australasia to the young Praed was merely a place to which convicts were transported, and the sufferings of these unfortunates led him to sincere but highly stilted passages in the vein of :

The hapless female stands in silence there,
So weak and wan, and yet so sadly fair,
That those who gaze, a rude untutored tribe,
Check the coarse question, and the wounding gibe.

Six years later, Alfred Tennyson, of Trinity, won with a poem on "Timbuctoo," which is at once a model example of how the set subject should be taken and a splendid proof that not all examiners are dolts. The poem is reputed to have been a refurbishment of an old one on a totally different subject. It is quite easy to believe this, the one direct mention of Timbuctoo occurring thus :

Then I rais'd
My voice and cried " Wide Afric, doth thy Sun
Lighten, thy hills enfold a City as fair
As those which starr'd the night o' the Elder
World ?
Or is the rumour of thy Timbuctoo
A dream as frail as those of ancient Time ?

It is a terribly obscure poem, but it contains magnificent things. The contrast between Tennyson's blank verse and the Augustan couplets which had won six years earlier is remarkable and significant of the transition through which our poetry had just passed. Another remarkable thing about Tennyson's success is that an outside critic noticed the poem and saw what Tennyson was going to become. "Timbuctoo," said the *Athenaeum* on July 22nd, 1829, was the work of a really first-rate poetical genius:

We have accustomed ourselves to think, perhaps without any very good reason, that poetry was likely to perish among us for a considerable period after the great generation of poets which is now passing away. The age seems determined to contradict us, and that in the most decided manner; for it has put forth poetry by a young man, and that where we should least expect it—namely, in a prize poem.

Tennyson's composition, said his critic, would have done honour to any man who ever wrote.

The poets have done as well as could be expected. But the general dulness, unoriginality, even absurdity, of the subjects set for the University Prize Poems cannot well be exaggerated. I have forgotten what was the subject set at Cambridge just before the war which was so preposterous that for the first time on record not a single undergraduate submitted any verses, but I remember that shortly before my own time the poets of the University were asked to write on "The Coronation of King Edward the Seventh

and King Edward the Confessor." This was a merely manufactured subject. I can conceive the unhappy aspirants setting to work with lists of comparisons and contrasts : as " Resemblance : both called Edward," " Difference : earlier Edward wore hair shirt, later Edward did not." Often enough the subjects, whilst quite reasonably likely to inspire poets, are unfair as putting too great a premium on local knowledge of fact. It is all very well to set " Tibet " (as was once done), for nobody will have been there and fancy can run free. But a year before " Tibet " was set the subject was " Durham "—one of scores of towns which have been set at Oxford and Cambridge. How well I remember my first and only attempt to begin a poem for that comic competition. I had never been to Durham. I knew that the great points about it were the picturesqueness of its site and the hoary age of its cathedral. The first thing I did was to go to reference books, which told me that St. Somebody was there in 700, and that a rough wicker-work church was built on the site of the present, etc., etc., in 800. This didn't do ; I got a photograph and let my imagination go. But what was the good of that ? Adjectives began pouring in all over the place. Yet I did not really know whether the roofs in Durham were red or blue, whether the houses were grey stone or red brick ; whether industrial smoke covered the town, whether it roared with machinery or was wrapped in a quiet, like that of Bruges-la-Morte. I knew that mistakes in fact about an accessible English town would dish me at once. I did not feel inclined to pay for a return ticket to Durham on the off-chance of getting a five-ounce

gold medal ; so I gave it up. Had the favoured borough been Exeter or Truro I should have been all over it at once, and the North-countrymen would have been the sufferers.

What on earth made me begin this ? It is all right ; but why now ? Well, I have just been told the subject set at Cambridge this year, and it seems to me a good one. It is occasional, and in the tradition, but it happens to be a theme which might well capture and fire a young man who began toying with it in even the most cold-blooded way. It is just a hundred years since the death of Napoleon, and the Death of Napoleon is the subject set for the Chancellor's Medal. Something more than the ordinary neat elegiac verses may come out of this if there happens to be in Cambridge at the moment an undergraduate of the young Tennyson's quality. I don't mean we should expect a great poem. People do not usually write such things when very young and they do not write them to order. But the subject is one which, examiners or no examiners, must already have sometimes enforced the attention of almost any imaginative young man with a capacity for thought. Napoleon is an obvious symbol for all the powerful and transient things in life ; career and end are intensely dramatic ; and as for the " setting," a poet describing " the last phase " has half his work done for him before he begins to write. An undergraduate with brains, feelings and a natural capacity for the best kind of metrical rhetoric may --to put it no higher--do a fine tour-de-force on this subject, and I look forward to the result with curiosity.

BURTON'S ANATOMY

I HAVEN'T noticed anybody celebrating, but this 1921 happens to be the tercentenary year of the publication of Burton's *Anatomy*, a book which Sterne stole from, which Dr. Johnson revered, and which Lamb finally established in its rightful high place in our literature. Its author, a wrinkled and bearded don of Christ Church (and a clergyman), wrote nothing else but a Latin comedy. "The Anatomy" was his life-work ; the amount of reading and note-making he did for it must have been vast. What people who haven't read it think it is like I cannot conceive ; but they cannot possibly have any accurate notion. Nobody would expect, with such a title, to find an enormous tome, wherein melancholy, it is true, is anatomised, and much play made with humours, fluxions, and bile, but in which there are thousands of the queerest and most amusing anecdotes and short stories in the world. Consecutive reading is unnecessary. Pick it up anywhere, and begin even in the middle of any chapter ; you may read on and you will be entertained and informed.

I doubt if many men have read it through. The one part to read through is the most famous, and it must be agreed the most amusing, section of the book, the preface, "Democritus to the Reader." The book on the title-page is ascribed to Democritus, Junior (D. being, you will remember, the laughing philosopher), and the author professes to be strictly anonymous. "Seek not after that which is hid," he

remarks, “if the contents please thee, and be for thy use, suppose the Man in the Moon, or whom thou wilt, to be the author, I would not willingly be known”—this being oddly coupled, in the first edition, with the signature, “From my Studie in Christ Church, Oxon., December 5th, 1620. Robert Burton.” The address of the young Democritus is the most extraordinary compost of waggery, shrewdness, whimsicality, fantastic learning, originality and “scissors and paste” in the language. Any good thing that he found in a classical author he would make relevant somehow, and he had the delightful habit of accompanying most of his quotations with pithy and full-flavoured translations. I will quote a few sentences from this preface.

Here we have one which contains the Truth about Advertising :

Howsoever, it is a kind of policy in these dayes to prefix a phantastical title to a book which is to be sold : for as larks come down to a day-net, many vain readers will tarry and stand gazing, like silly passengers at an antick picture in a painter’s shop, that will not look on a judicious piece. . . .

. . . Many men, saith Gellius, are very conceited in their inscriptions, and able (as Pliny quotes out of Seneca) to make him loyter by the way, that went in haste to fetch a mid-wife for his daughter, now ready to lye down.

You can’t put it more strongly than that ! Most of his good things bristle thus with the names of the

BURTON'S ANATOMY

ancients ; yet his mere choice, and the wording of his versions, communicate powerfully the colour of his personality. "To be busied in toyes is to small purpose, yet hear that divine Seneca, better aliud agere quam nihil." "To this end I write, like them, saith Lucian, that recite to trees and declaim to pillars, for want to auditors." "So that often-times, it falls out (which Callimachus taxed of old) that a great book is a great mischiefe." "Though there were many gyants of old in physick and philosophy, yet I say with Didacus Stella, 'A dwarf standing on the shoulders of a gyant, may see farther than a gyant himself.'" Thus all the names in Lemprière are tumbled out. But Burton knew what he was doing. It was, perhaps, a little cool of him to accuse other men of larding "their lean books with the fat of other's workes," and to ask, "If that severe doom of Synesius be true it is a greater offence to steal dead men's labours than their cloaths, what shall become of most writers ?" But perhaps he said this to annoy the dullards. For his own books, though larded with the fat of others, had fat of their own ; and the greatest of English patchwork-makers was no plagiarist.

He preferred, it pleased his odd taste, to back up the most straightforward of his own reflections with a quotation from some recondite dead man. "But as Baronius hath it of Cardinal Caraffa's workes, he is a meer hog that rejects any man for his poverty." His own attitude comes through clearly enough. He had not written a religious work. He admitted that divinity was the queen of professions, but "there be so many books in that kinde, so many

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commentators, treatises, pamphlets, expositions, sermons, that whole teems of oxen cannot draw them." But a good deal of his religion comes out, and his opinions on social matters are interesting and enlightened. He drew the picture of an ideal state, where murder and adultery would be punished by death, but not theft ; for he had no worship of property. Here are a few of his sentences on such matters :

To see a man wear his brains in his belly, his guts in his head, an hundred oaks on his back, to devour an hundred oxen at a meale ; nay, more, to devour houses and towns, or, as those anthro-pophagi, to eat one another. . . .

Wrangling lawyers who . . . are so litigious and busie here on earth, that I think they will plead their clients' cases hereafter, some of them in hell.

[In his imaginary state] hospitals of all kindes, for children, orphans, old folkes, sick men, mad men, souldiers—pest-houses (not built precorio, or by gowty benefactors who, when by fraud and rapine they have extorted all their lives, oppressed whole provinces, societies, etc., give something to pious uses, build a satisfactory alms-house, school, or bridge, etc., at their last end, or before perhaps ; which is no otherwise than to steal a goose, and stick down a feather, rob a thousand to relieve one).

He was anti-militarist, and he touched on the problem of unemployment. But one of the most interesting

BURTON'S ANATOMY

of his political sentences leads nowhere : “ I have read a discourse printed anno 1612, discovering the true causes why Ireland was never intirely subdued, or brought under obedience to the crowne of England, until the beginning of his Majestie’s happy reign ! ”

The “ Anatomy ” first appeared as a quarto ; the well-known folios came later. It was successful from the first, and according to Anthony à Wood the bookseller got an estate out of it. Le Blon’s celebrated and beautiful title page first appeared in the third edition, accompanied by a note from the author saying that he would revise no more. But the maggots in a head like that are not so easily quieted. The revisions proceeded, and even the sixth (posthumous) edition contained corrections which the author left behind in manuscript. Sir Charles Whibley, in his recent delightful book, “ Literary Portraits,” has an interesting note on the book. “ ‘ How comes it,’ asked Mr. Bullen in 1893, ‘ that the *Editio Princeps* of the “ Anatomy ” is not in Christ Church library ? ’ There is one excellent reason : the copy, which Burton presented to the most flourishing college in Europe, is now in the British Museum. The inscription on the back of the title page is unmistakable : *Ex dono Roberti Burton aedis hujusce alumni*. But how it escaped from Oxford to London is unexplained.” Possibly, during some era when early quartos were underrated, it may have been sold as not being the best edition ! I seem to remember that the Bodleian copy (now back at Bodley’s) of the First Shakespeare Folio went similarly astray.

A VETERINARY SURGEON

IT is often observed that there have been ages when many Englishmen wrote first-class, and most Englishmen could write interesting, prose. The marks of our Elizabethan and Caroline styles are not easy to define. There was a universal movement of speech just as there is a prevalent tone in our folk-songs. But there was more than that. The style was the man, or, rather, the nation. The habit was to call things what they were, to put on paper what you saw and thought as you saw and thought it. And specialisation had not set in. A metaphor was not considered a waste of space in a "dry" book ; personality was nowhere excluded ; even State papers were written vividly and racily. To-day every book, as it were, bears a label : "This book is intended to contain good prose," or "this book is not intended to contain good prose."

Now, if there is one place in which one would not look for good, muscular, amusing English that place, I should say, is a modern medical treatise, and, above all, a treatise on veterinary surgery. "Diseases of the Cow," "Some Observations on Swine-Fever," "Ovine Obstetrics," "Notes on Farcy, Glanders, Epizootic Lymphangitis and Anthrax" : confess, reader, that when you see such titles as those on a row of books in a friend's library, you never think of making a closer acquaintance with their authors. Yet, time was when veterinary science, like military science and every other science, was in close contact with the humanities,

A VETERINARY SURGEON

and when it was not considered strange that an expert writer on farriery should use the tropes of a poet and the periods of a pulpiteer and delight in the exercise of that faculty for good speech with which God had endowed him. I have just been reading a work by such a man. It was published as late as 1687 by J. Hindmarsh, at the Golden Ball, against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. Its author was Andrew Snape, Junior Farrier to His Majesty. And its title is (I give it in its picturesque fullness), “The Anatomy of a Horse, containing An exact and full Description of the Frame, Situation, and Connexion of all his Parts (with their Actions and Uses) exprest in Forty-nine Copper-Plates. To which is Added An Appendix containing two Discourses: the one, the Generation of Animals; And the other, of the Motion of the Chyle, and the Circulation of the Bloud.”

That was Snape’s subject; and his manner of writing was sometimes that of the curious Coryat or the waggish Fuller, and sometimes reminds one of the eloquent Taylor or Sir Thomas Browne. He knew his job. He was a practical man if ever there was one: his accounts are clear and first hand, his plates look so good that I imagine them to be still valid. But he had time for reflection, and he saw the horse as part of the Universal Order. You get a flavour of his sententious charm in the introduction:

Now, order of dissection requires that you should first begin with the Head, it being the most mobile and excellent part; next that of the Chest, and lastly the Belly: but this (as I have

said) is not to be done where there is but one body, for there you must begin with those parts that are most subject to Corruption, wherefor you must first cut up the Lower Belly, then the Chest, and lastly the Head ; both which ways are often used, the first being called the way of dignity, and the other of diuturnity ; the one being more noble, and the other of a longer durance.

And it was quite natural to him to begin his book proper with a commendation of the horse. " Before I take in pieces this Goodly Creature, It will not be amiss if I just give you an account of all these Parts as they lie in order, beginning with that which first appeareth to our View, and that is the Scarf-skin adorned with hairs, wherein (as a Case) Nature hath wrapped this stately beast."

I never thought I should spend half-a-day reading about the nerves and muscles, the livers and midriffs of the horse. I love this goodly creature. I have even been known to mount this stately beast and, on occasion, he hath caused me to fall. But his interior has never greatly aroused my curiosity. It has taken Andrew Snape to do that, and I could read Andrew Snape on anything. Hear the Royal Farrier on the horse's hair :

And hence may be gathered a reason of the shedding of the hair, which is observed to happen in many Horses that have ill keeping, such as your Cart-horses that seldom have any labour bestowed upon them, for want of which dressing to remove the dust which lieth upon the mouths of the pores or at the roots of the hairs, the

passages, through which the juice should come that nourishes the hair, are obstructed or stopped, and so like dead Leaves from a Tree in Autumn they drop off, or as untimely Fruit falls before the season of the year requireth it.

If the choleric humour doth most predominate, then are the hairs of a black, or sorrel or a chestnut colour ; If bloud most predominate, then will the Horse be a bright Bay or Roan ; If flegme, then the Horse will be of a milk-white or yellow-dun ; If melancholy, then will the Horse be of an iron-gray or Mouse-dun. Thus much for the colour of the hairs, next I come to the use of them.

The use of the hairs is, first to cover the skin ; secondly, to defend it ; thirdly, to be an ornament to it.

Even his most technical pages abound with these charming passages, and on general topics he is always delightful. Take him on germination :

The Eggs (or Seeds) of Plants being excluded out of the Egg-Bed (called a Pod or Husk, or by whatever other name distinguished) requiring further fostering and brooding, are committed to the Earth by the officious Winds or by the industry of Men. This kind Mother having received them into her Bosom, doth not only give them incubation or brooding by her own halituous vapours joined with the heat of the Sunbeams ; but doth by degrees abundantly supply what the fruitful Seeds stand in need of.

I said that the old common prose was marked by a general inclination and ability to call a spade a spade,

by a readiness to use apt ornament anywhere, by a music to which all men were accustomed. It gained much by the homogeneity of philosophy ; everything was looked at in the light of everything else, and God or the dulcimer may meet you on any page of a medical book. But there is often something more—and even now I have not mentioned that adventitious deliciousness that comes from the parade of “ knowledge ” now outworn or obvious. I mean the suffusion by a reverent and humble spirit, less common among writers now than it was in the seventeenth century, or at any rate less easily disclosed. I can do no better than end with part of a digression that occurs in the middle of the chapter on the Muscles :

I hope no curious and ingenious Anatomist, that knows how much time and pains is necessary to be spent upon the exact examination of any one Part, will think me sluggish and supine, that I have not in those few years that I have applied my self to this study, attained as yet to the full knowledge of all the Parts of this Beast that I anatomicize. And as on the one hand I hope I may myself attain to greater skill in this Art than I have yet ever arrived at ; so on the other hand I would not be guilty of the vanity of thinking to monopolize it, but shall both desire and hope that others will make up what I shall leave imperfect. But thus much I hope may serve for mine Apology with all ingenuous Men, I shall therefore return from whence I have digressed.

What could be better expressed ?

THE LONELY AUTHOR

I HAD left my friends. I had rather a long journey before me, and I thought I would break it. Half-way there was a cathedral town, a few miles from which is a house where I counted on being put up for the night. But I had left it too late. A tardy telegram produced the reply that everybody was away, so I was left stranded. "Very well," I thought, "I will go to a hotel." This I did, but, the pleasures of the table exhausted, the hotel provided no others. There was no billiard room, and the guests were all of that sort of restless and self-centred birds of passage with whom it is impossible to enter into conversation, much less get up a four. When I had read the newspaper cuttings about royal visits to the hostelry and the times at which the stage coaches used to leave it for London in Lord North's day, I was left without occupation. Like a fool, I had forgotten to get anything to read, having not a single volume with me except the latest cheap volume of Tarzan from which I had drained the last drop of honey—or, should I say, blood—in the train. With my most insinuating smile, I attempted to borrow something from the lady in the office. She had nothing, but told me that the whole library of the hotel was in the Resident Visitors' Smoking Lounge. My spirits rose, and I went to that room. It was a very odd collection. There were about twenty volumes in all, including the corpses of old Bradshaws from which the vital spark of utility had long since departed. Even I, omnivorous reader as I

count myself, cannot hoax myself into curiosity about the time at which the fast trains got to Bristol in 1888. But the other volumes were not much more alive to me. I shut as soon as I had opened the grimy bound volumes of the *Magazine of Art*; the *Temple Bar* did not detain me. The few novels were all books which I had read long since and did not wish to read again, "John Halifax, Gentleman," being the most notable. There remained three things of some interest. The first was an old green book about English Freshwater Fish, the second an odd (and not the first) volume of an extremely long and tedious analysis of Edmund Spenser's poetry, and the third an inscribed copy—I supposed somebody had left it there—of a long political poem by William Allingham. Allingham's signature interested me, and I have liked some of his shorter poems, but one or two pages of this laborious narrative made it plain to me that even the brown trout, the chub, the dace and the roach had more charms for me than Allingham's blank verse. So with a discontented sigh I got my coat and hat and went out into the frosty moonlit night. After all, oughtn't a man of sensibility to be content with a cathedral town under the moon?

It certainly was beautiful. There was no traffic, and the few pedestrians slank quietly through the shadows. In the narrow streets the lamps lit up old timbered fronts, gables, and projecting upper stories. The river, with a moon reflected in it, ran quietly under the old stone bridge, overhung by willows insubstantial in the moonshine. Here and there I had peeps of the towers of the cathedral, and at last

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I came upon the lawns around it whence its huge bulk, shadowed with buttresses and statuary, rose ghostly to the sky. But passing under an archway I came upon a wide enclosed place of shining grass surrounded with long Georgian houses, faintly porticoed and trellised. Through the lit yellow blinds of their upper windows came, as I walked, sounds of one music succeeding another, a piano, a violin, a voice. It was cold and the place deserted, and it was then that I fell to statistics.

For I was feeling cold and lonely. It was still, by my standards, early. I didn't want to go back to the faded carpets, the varnish, the stuffiness, the tawdry sitting-room and bleak bedroom of that very historic hotel. I wanted talk and company, and in all that town there was nobody to whom I had, I thought, a right to speak. But nobody ? It suddenly occurred to me that I was an author, an author of books. Not a very popular author, not an author who counts his sales—much less his receipts—by tens of thousands ; but an author nevertheless whose works have to some extent penetrated the educated population. For the first time in my life, as my footsteps rang again down an empty and thrice-traversed High Street, I made a computation as to the gross total of all my volumes which had been purchased by the public. There were so many thousands. The population of the United Kingdom was, say, fifty millions. Take the average number of my volumes owned by each of my patrons as two, assume the population of that town to be twenty-five thousand ; the deduction was that—and as it was a cathedral city, full of learned people, the chances were nominally

in my favour—in at least two or three houses of that town there existed copies of my books bought, paid for, probably read, possibly liked by the inhabitants. But which houses?

Here was I, solitary and chilled. Yet, perhaps, in the very house I was passing, whose curtains gave me a peep of mahogany, old silver and books, there must be one or two strangers within a few minutes of me who might even be glad were I to walk suddenly in upon them. I had never heard their names; yet to them, for such is the magic of authorship, to them if to nobody else in the whole town, even my Christian names were familiar, possibly my age, the outlines of my education, the development of the talents they were generous enough to have perceived in me. I attempted to picture what they might be like. I had glimpses of a cultivated doctor who collected books, of a plump canon's intelligent son home for the vacation, of a pair of spinster ladies, with wise eyes and greying hair, living at peace amid charming furniture, reading a well-chosen parcel from Mudie's every week. Whatever they were like, there they must have been. Possibly you, reader, were yourself one of them, and would have been delighted at one—I can't promise that you would have liked more than one—visit from so congenial an artist. But I passed your door with a sound of footsteps like any other; I heard the murmur of your voice like the murmur of any other voice; I saw the portico of your house for the first time and the last, and have now forgotten it. Had you accidentally come to the door I might have spoken. As it was I went back to the hotel and was bored.

CRITICS IN 1820

THE centenary of Keats's "Lamia" has just —well, I won't say been celebrated, but occurred; and the few people who have commented on the fact have dutifully reminded themselves how wrong their predecessors were about Keats. He was told to go back to his galley pots: the Muse could have no relations with a Cockney apothecary. Reading these remarks, and others about the general gullibility of critics and their common failure to recognise genius, sent me back to those old reviews.

Certainly they contain a great many deplorable misjudgments: so many that one finds some comfort in Leslie Stephen's observation that "criticism is an even more perishable commodity than poetry." Keats, except from his personal friend, Leigh Hunt, scarcely got a word of printed commendation until just before his death; and the sales of those volumes which the gallant Taylor and Hessey published were grotesquely small. Generally speaking, he was treated as a contemptible satellite of the fractious Cockney Radical, Leigh Hunt. *Blackwood*, in an article on the Cockney school, perpetrated an extremely sweeping sentence, when, after dressing down Leigh Hunt, it menaced his "minor adherents . . . the Shelleys, the Keatses, and the Webbes," not the least remarkable feature of which sentence is the bracketing of Mr. Webbe, whose very name is now unknown, with two of the greatest of English

poets. The *Quarterly* on “Endymion” was almost as sweeping. It began its review with :

Reviewers have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author’s complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work.

They had made efforts, but no power on earth could carry them through ; they even questioned whether the author could be really called Keats, “ for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody.” After several pages of trouncing we come to “ But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte.”

Coleridge and Wordsworth received their worst treatment from the *Monthly Review*, the remarkable organ which years before had said that “The Vicar of Wakefield” had “defects enough to put the reader out of all patience with an author capable of so strangely under-writing himself.” It reviewed “Lyrical Ballads” (which only had one review in its first three months) as a mere series of imitations of the ancients, with the comment, “None but savages have submitted to eat acorns after corn was found.” The “Ancient Mariner” was described as “the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper.” “Tintern Abbey” was admitted to be “poetical, beautiful, and philosophical,” but “somewhat tinctured with gloomy, narrow and unsociable ideas of seclusion from the commerce of the world ; as if men were born to live in woods

and wilds, unconnected with each other ! ” “ Genius and originality ” were discovered in the publication, but—

We wish to see another from the same hand, written on more elevated subjects and in a more cheerful disposition.

No such reservation was made by the *Monthly* about “ Christabel.” The rhythms were not to be tolerated :

We have long since condemned in Mr. Scott and in Miss Holford and in fifty other males and females, the practice of arbitrary pronunciation assumed as a principle for regulating the length or rhythm of a verse. . . . This precious production is not finished, but we are to have more and more of it in future ! ”

Were it not that good writing had died out “ it would be truly astonishing that such rude, unfashioned stuff should be tolerated.” “ The poem itself,” was the conclusion, “ is below criticism.” Of “ The Excursion ” we know Jeffrey said, “ This will never do,” and Brougham’s review of Byron’s first book is a classic :

The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. . . . His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water.

There certainly was weak verse in the book, but there was much that was precociously clever, and Brougham was absurd when he said, remarking that everybody wrote poetry when young, that “it happens in the life of nine men out of ten who are educated in England ; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.”

“ Whatever judgment,” concluded the *Edinburgh*, “ may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content, for they are the last we shall ever have from him.” Within ten years the *Edinburgh* had to eat its words pretty thoroughly. It was barely ten years afterwards that the great notice of “ Childe Harold ” came out in which Byron was bracketed with Rousseau as having “ extraordinary power over the minds of men,” and was told that “ his being has in it all the elements of the highest poetry.” And to do reviewers justice, not all of them took so long to wake up about everybody. *Blackwood* may have reprobated Shelley, but it called “ The Revolt of Islam ” the work of a genius, and contrasted Shelley with his contemporaries : “ Hunt and Keats, and some others of the School, are indeed men of considerable cleverness, but as poets, they are worthy of sheer and instant contempt.”

Mr. Shelley, whatever his errors may have been, is a scholar, a gentleman, and a poet ; and he must, therefore, despise from his soul the only eulogies to which he has hitherto been accustomed —paragraphs in the *Examiner* and sonnets from Johnny Keats.

Burns obtained recognition from the *Monthly* in the very year of his Kilmarnock volume ; Jane Austen's "Emma" received an elaborate eulogy in the *Quarterly* on publication ; and Alfred Tennyson at twenty-one was the subject of a full-length article in the *Westminster Review*. It was by John Stuart Mill, and began in a characteristically Utilitarian manner :

The machinery of a poem is not less susceptible of improvement than the machinery of a cotton-mill ; nor is there any better reason why the one should not retrograde from the days of Milton, than the other from those of Arkwright.

Tennyson's merits were fully exposed, and he was urged (he unhappily acted on the advice) to turn himself into a didactic and statesmanlike poet.

Let us not be too gloomy about the reviewers. They are at their worst in an age of technical and intellectual transition, when change revolts them. Even when we are talking of the Revolutionary epoch we must remember that most of the poets encouraged each other ; that Charles Lamb was early in his perception of the greatness of Wordsworth and Coleridge ; and that, after all, there *was* Leigh Hunt. He was also a critic, as much as Brougham and Jeffrey, and his soundness deserves as much notice as their fallibility. He scarcely made a mistake ; there was no poetic genius of his age whom he did not detect almost instantly. He had something of the poet in him ; and the poets, though they sometimes made mistakes, are as a rule early

ESSAYS AT LARGE

to discover and sedulous to encourage contemporaries of genius. That any man who, because of his poetical knowledge or editorial sagacity or for some other extraneous reason, happens to have a new book to review should be expected to judge it correctly is too much to expect. Jeffrey and Brougham were men of great powers, but why on earth should we imagine that they would be anything but mistaken about Byron or Keats or Shelley when these, in their immaturity, first appeared ? They are very inadequate basis for the despairing deduction that all critics in all ages must inevitably be wrong, or can only be right by chance.

AN OLD CALENDAR

HERE is nothing which more vividly and acutely evokes the past, the day-to-day life of the past, than an old reference book. By reference book I do not mean encyclopædia or dictionary: those certainly are reference books, but their usefulness is not confined to a particular year or generation. They have not the extreme topicality of the annual publication, which records events of the past year that may never be recorded again, which announces as immediately forthcoming events that come, and pass, and are then added to the cemetery, which contains so much information that for a moment is deemed indispensable and then is totally neglected, and which, a year or two after it has been published, may never be looked at again. I daresay that Dr. Johnson's "Dictionary," though long ago surpassed in size and accuracy, if not in wit, by the works of other lexicographers, is consulted thousands of times every year. I am not the only person who habitually uses it. But who save myself has for an hour this year taken pity on the Cambridge University Calendar for 1826? Few indeed have access to it; there are probably not many copies in existence outside the libraries. It is the sort of book men throw away as they do superannuated Whitakers. But here and there one will remain on some high shelf in a country house where, a hundred years ago, the great-grandfather of the present tenant was fresh from the University. It was from such a house that the copy I possess found

its way into a bookseller's twopenny box ; it has come down from the past with something of the pathos of a pressed flower ; its freshness has gone, but it has a fragrance to the mind ; it was so ephemeral and yet it has outlived so much that was more solid ; it was grown and blew for one purpose, but, preserved, it fulfils another—to recall old things.

As a pressed violet bears some resemblance to the violets of last spring, so the University Calendar of 1826 is in hue and petal, though the hue has been dimmed by time, like the University Calendar of 1920. Calendars grew smaller in those days ; they had not, in flowers nor in works of reference, our passion for size. But the shape is similar, the grey boards are much like those we know, and the arrangement of the information is familiar. The volume is printed for Deighton, of Cambridge, still existing as Deighton and Bell, and among the seven other firms by which it is to be sold are Longmans, Hatchards, Simpkin Marshalls, and Parker, of Oxford, whose shop is still admirable and still inhabited by a learned Parker. Much is the same, but much breathes of an old world. The Classical *Tripos* had only just been started ; History and English had not been dreamed of as subjects deserving whole-time study ; mathematics still held the field as the principal study, with theology running it hard. The fellows, with a few conspicuous exceptions, were all celibate clergynien, and the most casual glance at the names of the undergraduates—less than half as numerous as they were when the late war broke out—will show that the University was considerably less democratic than now. It

is not that it was what the ignorant call merely “a playground for the rich.” There were always large numbers of poor boys with scholarships—Dr. Johnson’s name need only be mentioned, or Kirke White’s. But these were mostly sizars, living in a semi-menial state ; and great care was taken to distinguish the Noblemen from the Fellow-Commoners, the Fellow-Commoners from the Pensioners, the last from the Sizars. Most of the colleges were very small ; King’s was still a closed corporation of Etonians. It is often observed to-day that Trinity (which has about a fifth or a sixth of the undergraduates on its books) is disproportionately large ; but in 1826 Trinity and St. John’s together were half the University.

It is all interesting to one who knows the ground ; great changes can come by imperceptible degrees. But the names on the books have a peculiar fascination. Lord Palmerston was sitting member. Every page is thick with the names of undergraduates subsequently well known. Tennyson and his group had not yet come up, but Frederic Tennyson was at St. John’s, and among the Trinity freshmen was Edward Fitzgerald, whose name appears near the bottom of the list between Edward Arthur Illingworth and Thomas Daniel Holt Wilson, who had probably not a notion who he was. Spencer Walpole, John Wordsworth, Augustus de Morgan, and the Iron Duke’s young heir were also *in statu pupillari* at Trinity, and the two forlorn sizars at Peterhouse included one Ebenezer Elliott, afterwards, no doubt, to horrify his college by becoming the Corn Law Rhymer. At Trinity Hall F. D. Maurice was in his first year, and among the fellow-commoner B.A.s

was "E. G. Lytton Bulwer," who had won the Chancellor's medal for English verse in the previous year. It had been in existence thirteen years only. "Timbuctoo," that remarkable adaptation, had not yet been submitted. W. M. Praed had been the winner in 1823 and 1824, "Thos. B. Macaulay, Trin.," in 1819 and 1821, and William Whewell in 1814. It was a great feat on Whewell's part. Few of his admirers probably are aware of it; but it should not be forgotten that his natural ear for verse was such that in an ostensibly prose passage of one of his mathematical works he anticipated the stanza of "In Memoriam" with the remarkable sentence: "No power on earth, however great, can stretch a cord, however fine, into a horizontal line which shall be absolutely straight." One of Browne's medals in the preceding year had been won by Benjamin Hall Kennedy; the list of his immediate predecessors included "S. T. Coleridge, Jes." (1792), whose name is given a footnote "the celebrated poet," indicating that he had made amends for his lamentable Cambridge career. Keate and Samuel Butler (grandfather of the *enfant terrible*) were Browne's medallists in the year after Coleridge. Nobody has ever heard of the man who in 1825 won that remarkable Seatonian Prize for an English poem on a sacred subject. The whole list of those who had won it is decorated with only one good name, that of "Chris. Smart, Pemb.," who took it four times in succession from 1750. In 1826 they still did not think of him as author of the immortal "Song of David"; his footnote calls him merely "Translator of Horace." Some fames take a long time to

mature, and a still longer time to get academic recognition. But the Calendar did not overlook the fact that the fourteenth wrangler in 1819 was now "Second Professor in the Mission College, Calcutta."

1826. It was that year which saw the birth, to a Spanish father and a Scottish mother, of Eugenie de Montijo, the unhappy lady who after such vicissitudes and sufferings died the other day. The first of the Napoleons had been dead but five years then; every undergraduate remembered hearing the news at school. George IV was on the throne, firmly convinced that he had fought at Waterloo; Byron had died two years before; it was the year of Scott's "Woodstock." Keats and Shelley were as near to the young men of that time as Brooke and Flecker are to us; but they were less well known, and only the most original of undergraduates were beginning to read and talk about them. Yet I suppose that to the Empress Eugenie 1826 seemed like yesterday, and nothing really an old event that had not taken place ten years before it. In 2014 possibly there will die some infant of this year who will have acquired the reverence due to one who has bridged the great gulf of history separating 2014 from ourselves. And in that year some wandering eye may light upon the Cambridge University Calendar for 1920, now so very commonplace, and find it romantic. And some mind for a moment, encountering, reader, your name or mine in the list of members in the books, may linger over it for a moment, wondering whether it is mere fancy that that name has been encountered before, in an old magazine or between the covers of some ragged and forgotten book.

THE SEAMAN'S PROGRESS

ALLEGORIES are not in fashion. I, for one, am not regretting this. The metaphor and the simile are well enough; they are the life-blood of much good literature. An occasional parable we can read. But the metaphor which goes on for three hundred or six hundred pages we no longer want and no one now produces. Probably we are right. It is a most irritating thing, as a rule, to read a narrative and be conscious all the time of another story going on underneath. Nothing is more distracting than the uneasy uncertainty as to whether there is an allegory present in a work or not. I have never enjoyed reading Spenser's "Faerie Queene" so much as I did when I was a boy, and was unaware that Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex were supposed to be involved in it; and I resent the recent, not entirely unconvincing, attempt of a South African professor to discover a philosophical treatise beneath the multi-coloured surface of Keats's "Endymion." I like a person in a story to be a person and not a personification. The more uncertain the allegory, the more annoying and distracting; but that our modern dislike and distrust of all allegory has sense behind it is suggested when one contemplates the allegorical literature of the past and discovers how little sustained allegory has lasted. There are great books with allegorical elements, such as "Don Quixote" and "Pantagruel"; but the authors of those had the sense, once they had got their general implication clear, to let their characters

behave as such, not to force every detail into some mechanical symbolic scheme. The one great allegory in English, the author of which really succeeds, is “*The Pilgrim’s Progress*.” He had to face the enormous task which confronts all writers of close and sustained allegory and which has utterly beaten most of them : the task of making every incident, almost every sentence, signify some thought or action on another than the obvious plane, and at the same time to keep the surface-story so interesting in itself that, with full knowledge of its meaning, one can, if one likes, forget everything except that surface-story. Bunyan enchanting where Phineas Fletcher —whose “*Purple Island*” is, I suppose, the longest allegorical poem in English—bores to the point of maddening.

These general reflections sprang from a reading of a little book, not well known, I think, which I recently came across. Its title is “*The Seaman’s Spiritual Companion, or Navigation Spiritualised*,” by William Balmford, “published for a general Good, but more especially for those that are exposed to the danger of the Seas,” by Benjamin Harris, in “*Sweeting’s Rents, in Cornhil*,” in 1678—“ price bound, one shilling”; and it tempts me to add that if allegory had never been invented we should have missed some of the naivest and most amusing things we have. It is the absurd single metaphors that stand out as comic in the seventeenth-century “conceited” poets; and the obscurer allegorical writers, of course, forcing all their episodes and lessons into one series of comparisons, produce long strings of these preposterous things.

Mr. Balmford was a Bunyan *manqué*. Writing for his sailors in nautical diction (much as obscurer writers of prose tracts in our own day will symbolise the soul's pilgrimage by some narrative of life on the railway : collisions, danger-signals, and the Heavenly Terminus) he was ingeniously exhaustive, and every page of his book contains something odd. The oddity begins before the text proper : there is a commendatory poem by a lady friend (described as “ a gentlewoman, who was an intimate friend of the author's ”), which says, amongst other things :

It is not common for the Female Kind
In Printed papers to expose their mind :

a sentence which certainly could not be written to-day. There follows an address to the Courteous Reader, which states that “ the First Part of this Book is an Introduction to the Art of Soul-Navigation, and ought to have been so Intituled ”—the separate title-page having apparently been missed out by the printer. We are then plunged straight on to the high seas with :

A ship at sea that on the Waves is toss'd
In danger every moment to be lost
Is a true emblem of man's restless state :

a point that he proceeds to drive home, adequately, to say the least, his outline being the thirty-two points of the Spiritual Compass, by which the Mariner, in this Ocean of Woe, must steer. Here are some extracts :

THE SEAMAN'S PROGRESS

Rouse up, rouse up, and ply my Pump, my soul.

A man may erre in faith in three respects,
All which produce most dangerous effects.

Hast thou a mind to Traffick for Salvation
Then learn the art of Sacred Navigation.

Some ply the Pump, and others stand to sound,
And all to keep themselves from being drowned.

In such a case a Saint that's in the world
Tost to and fro in such a fury hurl'd,
Is made Sea-sick, and nothing now is more
A Saint's desire than Heaven its happy shore.

So 'tis with Christians, Nature being weak,
While in this world, are liable to leak.

Presumption and Despair, on these two rocks
Whoever runs with violence and knocks,
If on the first of these his soul but hit
'Tis very seldom but the soul is split.

Satan that roaring Lyon goes about,
To shipwreck souls his work it is no doubt.

'Tis better go to heaven in foul weather,
Through many dangers, if thou getst but thither,
Than in a pleasant gale to swim to hell,
Where gentle winds do make th' canvas swell.

Our language, for we are a seafaring people, is full of nautical idioms. Most of them come into Mr. Balmford's poem, notably, "on the rocks." The one I miss, and he had many opportunities of using it, is "half-seas over."

Being "tost to and fro," getting into "foul weather," and finally "splitting" on certain specified "rocks" are all of them very popular expressions in current political slang, and nothing, apparently, does a politician more harm with the electorate than to take a line of action that can be described in the terms of one or other of these metaphors. Scottish hecklers seem to make a special study of them. But perhaps, the most familiar of all is the idea of Heaven as a "happy shore," towards which we struggle through the raging seas of life. I should not care to say how often this metaphor occurs in the hymns of the Salvation Army, but I remember in particular one verse in which we are advised to

Leave the poor old stranded wreck
And pull for the shore.

In the "life-boat," of course.

I DO not possess £15,100 ; that I wish I did is irrelevant. Most people wish they did, and do not. It is possible that Shakespeare, who was a man not blind to the amenities of life, would have liked £15,100. He did fairly well ; he was, if not the C. B. Cochran of his day, at least one of its most successful managers. He bought New Place and he left Anne Hathaway his second-best bed, so that (as the Shakespearean commentators say) "there is little reason to doubt" that he had two. In his quiet way, being a man of taste who liked old things and read his bestiaries and books of venery as well as his Plutarch and his Montaigne, he probably collected books. He may have sometimes given as much as eight or nine shillings for some chronicle of wasted time produced by the fathers of printing or the mediæval monks. He may have heard of noblemen and queens who had paid really large sums, if not for books, at least for tooled and jewelled bindings. But it cannot be supposed that he would have been other than surprised had he known that a book (or two books together) of his own would, three hundred years after his death, fetch £15,100 at auction, although its contents were everywhere available for a shilling or two.

The mania—I use the word in no derogatory sense, for I share it—for first editions is not more than a century old. Men liked old books. Horace Walpole liked them, Charles Lamb was known to forego a new, and much needed, pair of breeches

for a folio ; many books fetched fair prices in the days of "Anglo-Poetica" because they were unobtainable in reprints. Really big prices begin with the Roxburgh sale, when magnificent specimens of early printing drew the fashionable world to the auction-rooms, and there was that contest between a duke and an earl for a rare Boccaccio, which the Rev. Thomas Dibdin described in phrases which would have been something turgid if applied to a mortal struggle of Homeric heroes. The first-edition cult followed. Prices steadily rose. But it was not until the last generation, when American buyers stepped into the ring, that the competition for rarities really became frenzied and prices prodigious. You are now lucky if you get a first-class copy of Herrick's "Hesperides" or Keats's "Lamia" under £130, and the prices paid for Shakespeare folios make the sums which excited the world's wonder in the hey-day of the Mazarin Bible look ridiculous. Unless he makes a find, akin to the discovery of Anglo-Saxon pennies in a furrow, the ordinary collector can no more hope to possess a "Venus and Adonis" than he can hope to become Grand Lama of Thibet.

I hear everywhere complaints about the monstrous prices now prevailing. No book, it is alleged, can really be worth £15,100 ; this is all a silly fashion. That is not a tenable view. If a first edition may be worth £100 it may be worth £10,000. To most of us the purest rope of pearls, except as a negotiable security, would not be worth £15,100. The Cullinan diamond itself would not be ; in fact, one would want to be paid very heavily even to wear it once as a stud. At the back of this criticism—which is also

heard when an enormous sum is given for a picture by a great artist like Rembrandt or a second-rate artist like Romney—is, I suppose, the feeling that, utility apart, the purchaser will not get as much pleasure out of a book (of which the text, remember, is obtainable elsewhere) as he would out of a similar sum expended on something else—modern books, for instance, at 6s. apiece. But it should be remembered that the persons who buy these rarities do not starve to do it ; they have all the other pleasures they want. Some of them are genuine collectors who get the same sort of pleasure out of first editions and out of rarities that is got by ordinary collectors like ourselves who think twice before paying a pound for a book : a few thousands mean no more to them than a pound to us. Some are philanthropists who desire—like the late H. C. Frick who has just left millions of pounds worth of pictures to New York—to leave great collections to public institutions. Some are adventurous persons who collect as a game, and go out to beat their neighbour in the competition for rarities. And some are ostentatious vulgarians who will do anything which excites attention and envy. Millionaires, rich philanthropists, rich romantics, and rich vulgarians are more numerous and more opulent in the United States of America than in any other country in the world. Hence the huge prices for works in the English tongue, and hence the constant stream of works of art across the Atlantic.

We hear ordinary collectors lamenting and protesting with sneers that prices are grotesque, and that the people who buy these books do not

really appreciate them. They fail to observe that amongst themselves inequalities of wealth produce results precisely the same in kind. One man can go to £5, another can go to £10 and does not hesitate to do so. As there are only three copies of "The Passionate Pilgrim" in the world, only three people would be able to possess them, whatever the price: and the selection of those three would be just as arbitrary if it were determined by anything else than wealth. What the man who collects and knows literature intimately can do is something far more amusing: namely, hunt for and purchase those rare or good books (every year adds to their number) for which hundreds of pounds are not yet being given by pork-packers: anticipate the market, in fact, if not from commercial motives. A poor book collector can get as much amusement out of his pursuit to-day as he could in any era, though the books he finds will not be those that were found when Lamb used to pick up Burton and the Dramatists in the mean shops off the Strand. And as for the bitterness about great rarities going to millionaires and to America, it is surely unreasonable. The millionaires do not hoard their books for long. They pass them rapidly on to public libraries, and, meanwhile, their assiduity and their opulence make it certain that copies of very rare early books will be preserved which might otherwise be lost. After all, if there are only a few copies of a book where better could they be than in public libraries, where everybody can see them and they are open to the consultation of all scholars? And why should not some of them be in American libraries?

Whenever an expensive book (or picture) goes to America there is always an outcry for the prohibition of exports. The tumult is usually to be observed in quarters not ordinarily conspicuous for a devotion to literature, whether old or new, or for the slightest acquaintance with the technique of collecting. Those who make it are apparently far keener on making a violent appeal to the emotions than they are on thinking about the elements of the question. It may be postulated that of every English book, and the rarer or the greater the book the more essential this is, there should be a copy in the British Museum, and copies if possible in a few other great libraries. They should be there both for sentimental reasons and in order that British scholars should have access to original texts. It is always (as Mr. Pollard has recently said in an admirable article in *The Observer*) regrettable when a "unique" copy of a book leaves this country. But beyond this where is the hurt to the national interest? What does it matter whether the twenty-fifth copy of a Shakespeare quarto is stowed away, unread, behind the wire screen of the Duke of Buckminster's library at Grooby, or whether it adorns the marble halls of Mr. Ephraim Seltzer, on Lake View Avenue, Chicago? Surely, not a bean. On the contrary, it is highly desirable that the Americans should have a good share of what are, after all, in large measure their own antiquities. It is often forgotten that the English language and English traditions—not to mention English blood—are not the exclusive property of the English people. Shakespeare antedated even the Pilgrim Fathers, and (though those particular Puritans

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probably did not appreciate the fact) they had as much of a vested interest in him as had their relatives whom they left behind. The English tongue is the tongue of Americans ; our literature is theirs ; our first editions are theirs ; and at this date they have already begun to take a fair place in our literary scholarship.

DICKENS'S FRIENDS

ONE of the fattest and fullest of recent books is Mr. J. W. T. Ley's "The Dickens Circle." Mr. Ley has tabulated about a hundred of Charles Dickens's friends and, taking them individually or in groups, brought together from memoirs and letters a great pudding of information about his hero's relations with them. I have enjoyed the book. It is about a writer who, to my taste, could be less easily spared than all subsequent novelists put together. And it is the sort of book which demonstrates what interesting literary works may be produced by men who altogether lack the gift of writing.

Mr. Ley resembles many compilers of literary memoirs, and most "students of Dickens," in that almost his sole literary gift is a mastery of the cliché. At the very outset, when one finds the sentence "If it be true that the proper study of mankind is Man, it is equally true that men most reveal themselves in their relations with men," one knows that all the other old sticks will parade across the scene. They do, and one greets each with a cheer. "My difficulty has been to decide what to omit," "Of the books I have consulted, I could not possibly give a complete list. Their name is Legion": thus proceeds the preface. And the opening sentence of the book proper is: "There is no surer test of a man's character than to ask, 'Who are his friends?'" Mr. Ley is the sort of devotee who continually refers to Dickens as "Boz"; on the strength of that

alone one could be certain that he would, when occasion arose, remark, “ ‘Tis true, and pity ‘tis, ‘tis true” ; that he would say, “ It must have been a red-letter day for the obscure young newspaper reporter on which he learned that his first book was to be illustrated by the great George Cruikshank,” and that he would speak of death as the passage into the Great Beyond. And so he does. It is as well to make this clear lest in recommending this book to the leisured reader I be supposed to imply that its author is another Walter Pater. But though Mr. Ley is not an artist in words, it does not matter. His labour has been mostly research, and its products are mainly quotations and anecdotes. He has collected them in such number that the publishers are justified in claiming that his is the most informative book of the kind since Forster’s “ *Life*. ”

It is not necessary to read the book straight through. If you do you may get tired of the “ *Dickens Circle*. ” Nobody could justly call it a Vicious Circle ; but a hundred accounts of the beginnings and developments of friendships taken in sequence are apt to seem a little monotonous. Besides, there is no chronological or other order which demands consecutive reading. As a book to “ dip into,” with or without a preliminary reference to the index, it is delightful. You get an immense number of extracts from Dickens’s letters, many stories, many portraits of “ *Eminent Victorians*, ” mostly of the not-quite-great kind, and an unsystematic but very illuminating picture of London in the ‘forties. You also get the charming oddments dear to that superficial antiquary who lives in most of us. For

instance, Dickens, Forster and Harrison Ainsworth used to go rides :

On through Acton's narrow High Street, with its quaint raised pavement and ancient red-tiled houses, past "Fordrush," Fielding's last well-loved home, past Ealing's parks and long village green, round through orchard-bordered lanes to Chiswick, with its countless memories, and so by Shepherd's Bush to Wood Lane and the Scrubbs, home again.

The thought of that sylvan ride on horseback now gives one a shudder. It is all new bricks and trams ; but then the Bush really was bushy, Wood Lane was a woody lane, and the Scrubbs no doubt covered with scrub. There is no mention of a meal in this passage. This is unusual. Dickens's contemporaries ate on the slightest provocation, and a new novel was invariably celebrated by a tremendous and uproarious tavern dinner.

One is impressed again with the unparalleled hold that Dickens had upon his generation, a hold far wider and firmer than that of Walter Scott or of Pope, who commanded the cultured world of his day as Dickens never did, but whose influence was confined to that world, and was purely an influence on taste. Before he was thirty, Dickens was one of the most popular men in the English-speaking world, and years before that he had established friendships with many of the most famous men of the older generation. His numbers were waited for in the mining camps of Australia more eagerly than

letters from home ; and he was only just over forty when a Lord Chief Justice paid him one of the greatest, though it be one of the most decorous, compliments ever paid to an author. Dickens had been summoned to a jury, and the judge said :

The name of the illustrious Charles Dickens has been called on the jury, but he has not answered. If his great Chancery suit had been still going on I certainly should have excused him, but as that is over he might have done us the honour of attending here that he might have seen how we went on at Common Law.

The whole of English-speaking manhood was, in a sense, his friend ; and he had as large a personal acquaintance with individuals as any other man could conceivably have had.

Mr. Ley ropes them all in, from Samuel Rogers to Carlyle, from Lytton to Augustus Egg, of whom he says : " In the novelist's home no one was more welcome than Egg." Macready, Longfellow, Thackeray, Browning, artists, actors, and politicians--they are all there. They met Dickens in an atmosphere of excessive geniality and, one is bound to add, of generous eating and drinking. To scores of them, and of scores of them, the emotional and open-hearted man wrote with an effusiveness that sometimes verges on gush. It is possibly significant that numerous though his friends were, they did not include many of the reticent type ; it is noticeable that the Tennyson chapter is very short, and perhaps symbolical that the name of Matthew

Arnold does not even appear in the index. The air of Dickens was a little warm for some. He longs to hold his friends in his arms ; he tells one that " I will fall on you with a swoop of love in Paris " ; he is very free with " Again and again, and again, my own true friend, God bless you," and " God bless you," and " God bless him," and " God bless her," are phrases even more common in his letters than in his works.

He was Tiny Tim, with some of the defects of that noble but rather wearying child ; all men liked him for his generosity, humanity, willingness to work his hardest for others, cheerfulness, and gallantry ; but they reacted variously to his, as some must have felt, almost too opulent benevolence, his almost too jolly joviality, his almost embarrassing affectionateness. Those who like to watch straws to see which way the wind is blowing may find a perfect straw in the nomenclature of Dickens's children. To name one's children after one's friends and the objects of one's reverence is a natural and excellent habit. But Dickens overdid it. He was not content to do the ordinary thing, and his children went through life branded with names like Alfred Tennyson Dickens, Walter Savage Landor Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, tokens at once of his sentimental promiscuity and of his intemperance of expression. It is odd—no, it is not odd—that with all this, all his communicativeness and sympathy and his multitude of friends, he leaves one nevertheless with the impression that the last intimacies of friendship he never experienced. He is the same to hundreds, very easily ready to catch

fire if a sympathetic spark showed, eager to establish a contact of hearts with people at first meeting. But his friendships, I think, though they strengthened with the accumulation of mutual memories, did not greatly deepen. All that his friends were likely to know of Dickens they knew soon. That is to say, they none of them thoroughly knew him ; and I have the idea that he did not know himself. After reading the whole of Mr. Ley's long story of correspondences, collaborations, and convivialities, after one has seen Dickens a thousand times as a ministering angel inspiring life-long gratitude, one still thinks of him not as this man's friend or as that man's friend, but as the friend of the human race.

POETRY AND COMMONPLACE

I HAVE been reading the Warton Lecture on English Poetry which was recently delivered to the British Academy by Mr. John Bailey. It is very seldom indeed that anyone talks sense about the nature and functions of poetry nowadays. Discussion has been furious about poetic technique : whether or not people should write in regular rhythm, or how far rhyme is permissible. There has also been a great amount of talk about the assimilation by poetry of modern philosophy, modern science, and all the material appliances of modern civilisation. One man has said that rhyme is jingle, another that it is a necessity. One man has said that the aeroplane and the gramophone are unmentionable in verse, another has refused to acknowledge the existence of any poet who did not devote his principal attention to these machines and things like them. Good poets usually know all about their business, but they are frequently silent during these critical controversies. I imagine that any of the great poets who had a capacity for observing and grouping facts and a power of deduction would come to very much the same conclusions as Mr. Bailey. For Mr. Bailey's contention—implied if not explicit—is that most of the controversy is off the point. It is a mistake to talk about poetry as though it were a new thing, or as though it ever could be a new thing. And it is a mistake to conduct an argument about the content of poetry except in the light of the body of accepted great poetry which we have inherited,

and of our knowledge of the human heart and the permanent conditions of human life.

Mr. Bailey quotes a number of passages of which I will reproduce one. It is this :

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end.

“Where,” says Mr. Bailey, “is the commonplace when we hear that voice? And yet what can be a greater platitude than that every moment of our lives brings us nearer to death? The truth, then, must be that both the word ‘commonplace’ and the thing it represents have more in them than we at first sight allow. To get the whole truth about them we need the old good meaning of the word as well as the later bad meaning. A commonplace may be obvious, but it may also be a universal truth, and as great as universal; only that its universality and its universal acceptance have now blinded us to its greatness.” He goes on to quote Wordsworth, who said that the business of poetry is not so much the discovery of new truths as the giving of new life to old ones. This, he says, is going too far. Of course it is. Poetry springs from emotion aroused by the contemplation of life and the universe. The material complexion of the universe to some extent changes with the progress of invention and discovery. New philosophies and religious conceptions come into being. New refinement of feeling become known to him who feels. It is quite possible that a new Wordsworth may write a great poem inspired by the contemplation of the theory of Dr.

Einstein. The language and the imagery of poetry will change with the changing times ; I think it was Coleridge who made a practice of attending lectures on physiology in order to acquire new metaphors and new similes. But in a certain sense Wordsworth did not go too far. For in the first place whatever it is that inspires the emotion—the response of awe or wonder or life to the beauty and the mystery of things—the quality of the emotion remains the same. And in the second place the conditions of our life are such that the mass of our poetry has in all ages been, and will probably be in all future ages, inspired by things that do not, humanly speaking, change.

Let me give an illustration of the first point. Those who are so anxious that every new acquisition of the race should be embodied in literature would afford a hearty welcome to the cholera microbe. I can conceive all kinds of revolutionary poems about that microbe. I daresay that they have been written; that they were full of ingenuity, of learning, of Latin names, and of unscannable lines. They may have been informative and interesting. But it happens that in the case of the cholera microbe we possess a poem by the discoverer himself, a man who cannot naturally be charged with indifference to the claims of the intellect and of science. He is Sir Ronald Ross. The curious—or rather inevitable and not at all curious—thing is that he scarcely mentions the microbe for its own sake at all. “This day,” he begins :

relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing . . .

The microbe has merely served as an instrument for arousing the emotions, as old as the race, of gratitude, wonder, and of triumph. It is from these emotions and others like them that poetry springs ; work that has not these behind, whatever it is, is not poetry. Brainwork is necessary ; observation is necessary ; but Milton said that poetry should be simple, sensuous and passionate, and Wordsworth said that it derived from emotion recollected in tranquillity ; and Milton and Wordsworth were two of the most intellectual of all our poets.

But the most important point in relation to the theme which is so ably expounded by Mr. Bailey is that over and above this there are certain dominant objects, more than all others capable of stirring our emotions and moving us to poetry, which persist through all the generations. That this has been so in the past requires little demonstration. You may start with the epics of Homer, and you will find that their principal elements are as familiar and as important to us as they were to the man of his day. What changes have taken place since then in the surface of civilisation, in our manners, in our theories, and in our equipment. The gulf between the galley and the Dreadnought could be paralleled ten thousand times ; yet what is there in the Iliad ? A woman's beauty, a war, a conflict of wills, courage, cowardice, wrath, grief for a friend, the laughter of a child. Where to the Greeks was the appeal of the Odyssey, except in that picture of the wanderer sailing the strange seas of the world, succumbing to temptation, vanquishing obstacles, and returning at last to his home and his wife ? The test may

be applied to almost all the great poetry of the world ; the most illiterate audience shares with Shakespeare a profound emotion in face of the tragedy of jealousy, the tragedy of unfortunate love, the tragedy of neglected old age. We may do this, that, and the other. We may fly, burrow, and poison each other with gas. But to the masses of men the principal things in life, the things which loom largest and most frequently as the vehicles of that which inspires emotion, are what they always were. We are all born and do not know where we came from ; we all have a childhood on which we look back ; we all experience love and the domestic affections, the types of which have not changed ; we live in a landscape of which the main features—hills, trees, waters, clouds—are permanent ; we all know that at the end of our road is death, and after that something concerning which we question the midnight sky in vain. Into this simple framework are our lives fitted; and however a few of us may specialise, and some may find in the joy of the novelty of exploration oblivion from the conditions of the common lot (a phrase which implies a recognition of Mr. Bailey's contention), it is in the contemplation of them that most men and most poets must inevitably find themselves most frequently and most profoundly moved.

SHAKESPEARE & THE SECOND CHAMBER

IF ever Shakespeare of Stratford is dislodged from his acknowledged position as author of the plays and poems first published as his, it seems certain that a peer of the realm is destined to replace him. None of the iconoclasts ever puts forward anyone so humble as a baronet. The most popular candidate is still Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam. Roger Manvers, Earl of Rutland, has been supported on very insufficient grounds, and last year a very learned Frenchman claimed to have traced the authorship to William Stanley, Earl of Derby, perhaps by way of delicate compliment to our present Ambassador in Paris. Now comes a new claimant. He is Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and premier earl of the realm ; the proofs that he was the true Swan of Avon are contained in “ ‘ Shakespeare ’ Identified ” by J. Thomas Looney.

Mr. Looney lets us into the whole progress of his speculations. He began in the ordinary way with doubts like Sir George Greenwood. Shakespeare could not have known all that law, all that Latin, all that about sport, all that about Italy. What sort of education could he have had at dirty and ignorant Stratford, a town “ destitute of books ” ? “ There is no evidence that William Shakespeare was ever inside of a school for a single day ” ; why should he do so “ in the unwholesome intellectual atmosphere of Stratford ” ? What little we know (and we certainly do know very little) about Shakespeare is commonplace and reflects neither credit nor

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discredit on him. Deciding that Shakespeare was not the man, Mr. Looney formulated his own ideas as to the sort of man he should look for. He found the man—an aristocrat, a lyric poet, a man connected with the stage, a man passionate and tortured by a woman, a man travelled and witty—in Lord Oxford. He looked up Lord Oxford's acknowledged poems and fancied he saw in them (what I do not see) convincing resemblances to Shakespeare's and a promise of mighty maturity. He then examined Lord Oxford's life and the plays and found what he thought striking resemblances between them, including a remarkable parallel to the revolting crisis of "All's Well." He finally persuaded himself after exhaustive chronological researches that Lord Oxford wrote "Shakespeare," that Meres and many others knew it, that authentic publication was suspended in 1604 when he died, and that the First Folio was published by a secret committee, probably including Lord Southampton. Will Shakespeare the actor, who had earned scarcely a shilling by acting or managing, grew fatter and fatter on the price of his name and (possibly?) on the price of silence. Why the deception should have been kept up so long after Oxford's death is not revealed.

Well, it is all very interesting. If ever I get past work, past the violent emotions, past a desire to do anything or change anything, with everything of fire in me subsided to a weak glow, I think I shall probably amuse my waking and invite my sleeping hours with the literature of the Shakespeare problem. To no problem has been devoted so much fruitless industry and misplaced industry, none has provoked

so much and such far-reaching argument from inadequate premises, argument ranging from the brilliant subtleties of clever men ridden with a theory to the magnificent tomfooleries of sheer idiots—in neither of which categories do I place the sober and almost plausible deductions of Mr. Looney. Nothing seems to exhaust the question ; this year it is Lord Oxford, next year it may be the Earl of Devon, or Lord Lonsdale, if there was a Lord Lonsdale then. Now the evidence is mainly cryptogrammic, now it is sartorial, now it comes out of the plays, now out of private documents, now out of the secret records of the Rosicrucians. An enormous number of Elizabethans have not yet been tried as possible authors (*e.g.*, Queen Elizabeth herself), and a vast amount of Elizabethan literature has still to be searched, sifted, decoded for clues. This controversy is not going to stop ; the mystery of Shakespeare really is sufficient of a mystery to guarantee an apostolic succession to the line of Donnellys and Gallups and Lefrancs and Looneys. The literature they produce offers inexhaustible amusement of a mild kind to the man who does not believe in them or expect to be converted. And I do not expect to be converted. I have seen enough of men of genius to know that they may come from the most surprising places, learn the most surprising things, and behave in the most surprising way—even to the point, Mr. Looney, of accumulating money and retiring into the country on it—even to the point of living normally among their county neighbours without leaving that “ very strong impression ” which Squire Shakespeare, of New Place, for all his powers (and perhaps because

he did know so much of men), apparently failed to make upon his neighbours at Stratford. I think Shakespeare may well have been, to Stratford, normal : the imaginative view of him at home was well developed in Mr. Thomas Hardy's tercentenary poem. I can swallow the lawsuits, the acting, the will, the second-best bed, the fortune, and the feats of self-education, and even the Stratford bust, far more easily than I can this monstrous figment of a conspiracy, known to very many people and mentioned by none, this cloaked and skulking author of rank never convicted of the greatest works the human brain ever conceived until three hundred years after his death. Especially do I not believe in that widely shared secret. Suppose Mr. Thomas Hardy, with the collusion of Lord Balfour, Lord Hugh Cecil, and Lord Haldane, and the co-operation of the Poet Laureate, Mr. Gosse, Mr. Gerald du Maurier, Mr. Owen Nares, and others, had over a long period of time attempted to palm off the authorship of his novels and poems, for private reasons, upon the late Sir H. Beerbohm Tree. Does Mr. Looney seriously suppose that it would not have leaked out ; that nobody would mention it in letter or diary ; that nobody, after the masquerader's death, would pass it on by word of mouth ; that the grand secret would only be arrived at after elaborate textual criticism in the year 2220 by some American lady or retired English judge ? Alas, no ! Secrets are not kept like that.

But I will say this : that there are two small things that make me wish that the Looney theory could be true. One is that if it were, Cambridge University

(my own college in it) would have a final argument to clinch its contention that it is unequalled as a nurse of poets. The other is that I really hate to think that the author of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" was anything like the bust on Shakespeare's tomb at Stratford. There is reason to believe (I think an illustration to Dugdale is the authority) that the Stratford bust has been altered since it was put up. The original face was not that podgy, complacent mug which now produces automatic rapture in tourists, but which must inspire him who looks at it in an unprejudiced way with feelings of repulsion and contempt. It was, according to the rough old engraving, a more worn and hollow, if a more morose, face. But even that earlier bust was unlovely, and Edward de Vere (the Duke of Rutland's portrait of him is a fine and convincing work) had a beautiful, proud, spirited face with all passion and all laughter latent in it. The First Folio portrait one cannot discuss because Mr. Looney—and there is the crudest kind of resemblance in general outline—holds that it was meant to be a portrait of Oxford. They could scarcely have dared publish such a portrait of any man while he was alive. . . . And yet the devotees, who will never yield an inch, often bring themselves to maintain that the Folio face is a fine face, just as they will maintain, on the strength of those Planchette signatures, that the man of Stratford wrote a fine bold flowing hand. He did not. But in spite of Mr. Looney I still think, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that he wrote the plays published over his name.

ON BEING A JONAH

I HAVE never much cared for the minor prophets, as men. Circumstances, of course, were against them. They fell upon evil times, and it was their duty—one sometimes beats down the suspicion that it was also their pleasure—to spend most of their time denouncing those who offered up burnt sacrifices in high places or walked in the way of the children of iniquity. Their forefingers were fixed in the posture of accusation, and their favourite monosyllable was “Woe.” They were disinterested men, but brooding, angry, vehement, sometimes soured, men. Amongst them all I have always felt least sympathy for the prophet Jonah. A certain compassion with him in his submarine period we must all, of course, have felt. But he is not an attractive character. His vindictiveness against the Ninevites was extreme. I have not my Bible with me, but I seem to remember that he was disappointed when they were not all extirpated: Jehovah was too merciful for him. A morose, splenetic, fanatical, black-avised man.

I feel a little closer to Jonah now than I did. They say that men, the survivors from some great shared enterprise or calamity, are bound together by a comradeship of experience. It is so; millions of soldiers can attest the fact. It is something of this kind that has drawn me closer to the prophet Jonah. Contact has been established. We have suffered alike, and we have something in common. Now I hasten to add that I have not been swallowed by a

whale. Nor do I expect to be. Palmists who have examined my clerkly hand have predicted many and various fates for me, numerous early deaths in the most diverse circumstances, deaths by field and flood, ship and railway. But not even a palmist—and palmists stop at little---has ever told me that I should, mortally or otherwise, lodge in the belly of a great fish. It is not this ; it is the immediately prior experience that has, though by proxy, befallen me.

I discovered that one of my works had for some weeks been out of print. I asked my publisher why this was. His answer took the form of a file of correspondence received by him. The first letter (as this is not an advt. I suppress the name of the book) was from a firm of printers in Scotland. It ran :

Dear Sir,

We have received a communication from the
— Shipping Company — informing us that
the s.s. —, which sailed on the 20th inst., has
been aground and that a portion of the cargo had
been jettisoned. We despatched by this boat the
undernoted on your account, and shall be glad to
know at your earliest, if any or part of it has been
received.

The undernoted consisted of a thousand copies of me. Enquiries followed ; a letter passed the other way ; and a second communication came from Caledonia :

Dear Sirs,

We are in receipt of your letter of January 2nd,
and regret to hear that the 5 bales have been

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jettisoned, which confirms the report we have received.

We are sorry to say they were not insured by us.

And finally, the binders woke up. They, too, apparently, had been all agog to receive my works ; looking forward to binding them. But they were men accustomed to concealing their emotions, typically English, reluctant to make demonstrations of sorrow or wear their hearts on their sleeves. Their letter ran :

Dear Mr. ——,

The 5 Bales of above have been thrown overboard we have found out.

Yours faithfully,

• • • • •

There ended the dossier.

I have endeavoured, lying awake in the darkness, to reconstruct the scene. The sailors, I think, were slightly dubious about Jonah from the first day out. They thought there was something a little sinister about him. He was not "simpatico," not (as the Esperantists so compactly put it) "samideano." That first day out of port they looked at him with sidelong eyes, and wondered whether they wouldn't have preferred a black cat or a Friday sailing. The second day they thought seriously of dumping him into a barrel of pork in order to express their dislike and distrust. The third day, as you will see, there was nearly a mutiny over the fatal five bales of incomprehensible books. Similarly, I conceive

that these mariners, who out of all that cargo selected my works for sacrifice when the moment for sacrifice came, had scented in them something they disliked from the start.

The steamer, I think, was going down the Firth of Forth, in a dead calm, with the black smoke lying flat and thick behind her, when some idle seaman, clambering over the cargo, came upon those five bales and wondered what they contained. One of them had a slight rent through which protruded a glaring yellow cover. Ben Gunn, or Ole Petersen, yielded, tugged, and began to peruse. He shifted his quid, and knitted his brows ; he uttered a full-flavoured nautical equivalent of Stevenson's young man's exclamation on seeing the old *Athenæum* : " Golly, what a paper ! " Very gingerly he stuffed my incomprehensible compositions back into the sack, and went to ruminant. At evening in the fo'c'sle he grumbled to his mates that there was something unlucky on board, gibberish in what looked like English and bore some resemblance to verse. All along the Lothian and Berwick coast when darkness fell the watch cast glances of malediction upon those sacks, whose canvas faintly shone in the lantern light.

The wind freshened. It rained. The wind whistled. It sleeted. The wind roared. The sea rose. Lurching and pitching she went ahead, drifting shorewards, shipping water at every roll. Through the mirk could be described a lee shore, cliffs, one or two misty lights. " We must lighten or ——" shouted the captain to the first officer. " Aye, aye, sir," replied the first officer to the captain. " Is there any cargo

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with which the world could easily dispense ? ” asked the captain. “ Yes, sir,” said the first officer ; “ there are many volumes of Herbert Spencer, ten crates of gramophones, and the collected edition of Mr. — — —’s speeches.” “ I like them all,” said the captain. “ Please suggest something else.” At this point the conversation was cut into and so was the Gordian knot. A bronzed and bearded sailor staggered up ; holding on to the taffrail with one hand and touching his forelock with the other, he explained that the crew refused to do another hand’s turn unless five bales of books by Squire were thrown overboard. “ We knew, sir,” said he, “ that there was suthin’ fishy about them books the moment they come aboard. This ship won’t come to no good until they be over the side.” There was no argument. The unhappy books, speechless themselves, had no defenders. Ten men with glittering eyes and bared teeth crawled towards them, two to a bale. They seized them, and with a last vengeful curse flung them far out into the maw of an advancing wave. A thousand copies ! Down they fell, through the boiling wrath of the sea’s surface, into the more equable waters below, and, in zigzag shift, settled to the sandy bottom. There they lie at this moment, in the little depressions they have made. It is a fine day and something of sunlight filters down to them. One of the sacks has burst open and its fatigued contents have tumbled out ; shut, gaping, open wide, face upwards, face downwards. Odd corners of print can be seen ; and at intervals through the opaque green a phantom fish glides up and, with staring eyes, slowly wagging its fins and gills, gapes

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at this pile of indigestible matter. Then he goes away. And I, for one, don't blame him.

But I have my consolations. Those ruffians may have thrown me overboard. But it did not save them. They were wrecked.

VALOUR AND VISION

“ **A**S the primary object of this little book is to help a cause dear to the heart of most English people, an excuse for the appearance of yet another war anthology is, perhaps, not so necessary as some explanation of the motives guiding the choice and arrangement of the poems.” This is the opening of the prefatory note to Miss Jacqueline Trotter’s “ Valour and Vision.” The profits from the book are to be devoted to the Incorporated Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Help Society ; but as it happens the book would have been justified without that. It is true that there have been numbers of war anthologies (the latest was the biggest and the worst), but none of them until this has been satisfactory. The compilers of most of them have had no other qualification for their task except an indisputable patriotism and a total incapacity to distinguish between genuine poetry and imitative verse. Miss Trotter’s book is on another plane. She has missed very few of the good poems, whether by soldiers or by civilians, inspired by the war, and she has included very little rubbish. There are here a few poems that can only be called doggerel. Most of them relate to the Navy. The Navy, I suppose, had to be represented, but it is traditionally speechless. The great rush of civilian recruits with literary tastes went into the Army ; some joined the R.N.D., but those fought and wrote as soldiers. Whatever the reason, literature has not come from the Navy, and the celebrations of its vigils and its victories has

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been mainly left to civilians, who have sat down, invoked the shades of dead admirals, remembered that destroyers are lean, and pounded out verses as hollow as they are, superficially, lively. These blemishes might well be removed from the book, but it is a beautiful selection, and (I think) the first which has been arranged with intelligence and imagination. Miss Trotter has recovered the war atmospheres in sequence. She opens with Mr. Binyon's fine "Fourth of August" :

Now in thy splendour go before us,
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,
In the hour of peril purified.

and ends with some beautiful lines by Mr. Lyon :

Now to be still and rest, while the heart remembers
All that it learned and loved in the days gone past,
To stoop and warm our hands at the fallen embers,
Glad to have come to the long way's end at last.

Now to awake, and feel no regret at waking,
Knowing the shadowy days are white again,
To draw our curtains and watch the slow dawn
breaking
Silver and grey on English field and lane.

Between these there is work, reflecting every dominant thought of the war, by nearly a hundred writers ; and a great deal of it remains good even when one contemplates it in the most detached way.

They used to discuss the effect of war on literature. The question is insoluble because it is too general. There are wars and wars. It is arguable that good poetry is the product of a general spiritual and emotional atmosphere, and that one war may produce a favourable atmosphere and another not : that, for instance, the nation must be in grave peril, not obviously fighting a smaller and weaker foe, and that its cause must be universally accepted as a just cause. Certainly all these elements were present in the late struggle ; had they not been it is possible that the feelings which are dominant here, love of life, reverent tenderness for England and fond lingering on every detail of her landscape, calm and proud acceptance of death, would not have existed, or at any rate not with this intensity and clean certainty. And it is from a clean and strong emotional response to beauty, whether it be moral or physical, that good poetry comes. The revival in poetry had begun before the war ; there had been the beginning of a return to a poetical, which is to say a healthy, outlook ; but without making any rash statements about wars in general (many of which have been disastrous to the spirit and some of which have had no demonstrable effect upon literature) it is indisputable that this war of England's—a perfectly just war against great strength, a war in its immediate motives chivalrous, a war which brought all the best of the country's youth willingly face to face with death—directly produced much beautiful and exalted feeling.

Many things are described by these poets : war by land, air, and sea. Amongst the more descriptive

poems are some not generally known. I had not myself seen Mr. Jeffery Day's extraordinarily vivid, cunning, and buoyant "On the Wings of the Morning," an account of a flight which takes one right through it. We have here the workings of conscience, struggles against the apathy and materialism that threatened us in 1917 and 1918, protests against the beastliness and cruelty of war and the moral dangers that threaten nations engaged, revulsions against the killing of ignorant enemies.

Oh touch thy children's hearts, that they may
know
Hate their most hateful, pride their deadliest
foe,

wrote Robert Palmer, just before he died in Mesopotamia, and Mr. Paul Bewsher, setting off on a bombing ride :

Death, Grief and Pain
Are what I give.
O that the slain
Might live—might live !
I know them not for I have blindly killed,
And nameless hearts with nameless sorrow filled.

But more than anything else it was the beauty of life and nature, and above all the beauty of England, lost, perhaps irrecoverable, that the personal and the national peril most deeply drove into the hearts of the soldiers who fought and sang, and of many of those who brooded at home.

Marching on Tanga, marching the parched plain
Of wavering spear-grass past Pangani river,
England came to me—me who had always ta'en
But never given before . . .

Hungry for Spring I bent my head,
The perfume fanned my face,
And all my soul was dancing
In that little lovely place,
Dancing with a measured step from
wrecked and shattered towns
Away . . . upon the Downs . . .

O bronzen pines, evening of gold and blue,
Steep mellow slope, brimmed twilit pools below,
Hushed trees, still vale, dissolving in the dew,
Farewell ! Farewell ! There is no more to do.
We have been happy. Happy now I go.

A dust which England bore, shaped, made
aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to
roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

These extracts could be paralleled a hundred times ; and less locally, the emotion inspired by the new beauty of things that might be snatched away blazes hot in what is possibly the finest of all the poems of the war, Julian Grenfell's " Into Battle," where the soldier, his courage confident, his peace made with Death and the Universal Will, rejoices in the grass, the horses, the stars, and the birds :

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The blackbird sings to him, “ Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another ;
Brother, sing.”

If a man feels like that he writes poetry.

With the exclusion of a few poems and the substitution of a few others Miss Trotter's book would be as good as a book of the kind could be. Only one of Rupert Brooke's sonnets appears ; the whole five should be here. The Poet Laureate's verses on Trafalgar Square are a serious omission. Flecker's ringing “ Burial in England ” should have accompanied his “ The Dying Patriot,” which is relevant to the war but was written before it, and Mr. Freeman's “ The Stars ” should as certainly have gone in even at the cost of leaving out one of the three poems by him which have been chosen. Mr. Brett-Young's “ Bête Humaine ” beautifully expressed something not expressed elsewhere ; there is a sonnet by Edward Thomas which is lacking, so is Mr. G. K. Chesterton's “ The Wife of Flanders,” and so are those majestic lines which “ A. E.” contributed to *The Times*. The sombre poems by the late Wilfred Owen were, I suppose, published too late to be taken in, but two poets from whom something should certainly have been drawn are the late E. A. Mackintosh and Mr. Ivor Gurney, who in “ The Poet Before Battle ” spoke nobly and naturally for all his craft.

REAL PEOPLE IN BOOKS

THE other day I met an acquaintance who looked unusually depressed. Depressed is perhaps scarcely the word : in his air was a mixture of resignation, sadness, and reproach, reproach born rather of sorrow than of anger. " Well," said his expression, " I didn't think you'd do it, and possibly you didn't know you would hurt me. But it was a careless blow, and though I have far more courage and stoicism than you think, I shall not easily recover from it." If his expression did not say all that it should have said it. It was not, I was happy to feel, addressed to me ; from me he sought rather consolation, those sweet lies which have been balm to many a wound. He had been badly hurt.

An old friend, a practising novelist, had put him into a novel. He was not the villain of the novel ; far from it, he was, if anything, one of the heroes ; he appeared very little and did several kind deeds. He was described as handsome, honourable, rich, moral ; and a hundred attributes were bestowed on him, the imputation of which could be resented by no sensible man. But the portrait was a recognisable one, and among the most accurate things about it were the indications of vices, or of weaknesses scarcely worthy of that name : let us say dislike of mental discomfort, unpunctuality, a slight defect of will. It was impossible to deny that the portrait, where it was not just, was flattering. Yet it was resented, as I think a truly faithful portrait by a friend would be resented by any man. It was resented as

not merely unkind (for one's friends should spare one) but unfair. And the notion of unfairness was easily traceable by an examination of my own breast. It was unfair, the victim felt, to depict any fault as a friend's fixed characteristic. For what are our faults ? Not, to ourselves, permanent elements in us ; at least not things necessarily permanent. They are rather smudges on a pane, cobwebs in a corner, which we could (and which we may) remove to-morrow if we liked. We may not think it worth while—for the moment—to pull ourselves together ; but all the pride of our unique personality rises in anger when the suggestion is made that the smudge is a flaw in the glass, the cobweb a part of the fabric. It is cruel to pin a man down in this way ; he hates to feel that there he is, with a description in print from which he will be unable to escape, which will hang like a millstone around his neck ; the whole world, as it were, conspiring to prevent him from changing. The least our friends can do is to refrain from telling, and especially from writing, the truth about us.

At best, to those who feel that decent behaviour is more important than any book, using real people as characters is a dangerous business. In the instance to which I refer I think no act was imputed to the character which he had not committed ; but even that did not prevent the wound. We must admit that novelists and playwrights may, always will, usually must, make use of the personalities of people whom they know. Not invariably. If a man writes a play about Nero he does not look around amongst his friends, however Neronic many of them

may be, to find a model for his principal character : he knows enough about Nero, though he never saw him, to give his imagination a starting point. He has a face, and the main features of the type and the individual : he wants to borrow nothing from A the journalist or B who lives in the Albany. But where contemporary fiction is concerned, though there have been novelists whose brains generated purely invented people as well as derivative people, it is an immense aid, whatever sort of person is being described, to bear (at the start at all events) a particular human being in mind. It is an obligation on the man who does this to disguise his character beyond recognition where there is the least possibility of offence : unless his whole purpose be offence.

There have been in our day a great many novels in which men and women one knew, or knew about, have appeared with no attempt at disguise : sometimes with every effort to ensure identification. There are living politicians, painters, authors, who are known to many people only through their alleged portraits in books. Novelists have contracted so habitually the custom of making things easy for themselves and securing a cheap pungency by drawing on their knowledge of Mr. Snook, R.A., Sir John Pigment, or Lady Jane Dolt, that many readers, when they get a new novel of the " *mœurs contemporaines* " kind, ask as they meet each fresh character, " I wonder who this is meant for ? " We continually find, within a week of a new novel's appearance, a rumour running round London to the effect that So-and-So is in it to the life or that

So-and-So gets it hot. This in a fiction is not the game, and the more realistic and convincing the fiction the worse it is. A man is introduced : his face, clothes, house, family, profession, achievements are precisely described ; his gestures and the very accents of his voice are reproduced ; and he is carried through a series of actions of which some are totally fictitious and others are copied from actions he is known to have performed. This is unpardonable : it is simply telling lies about a real person, lies which, if they sound likely enough, may cause not merely pain but serious practical embarrassment.

For me I should, I freely confess, be hurt if a friend, and annoyed if anybody else, set me truthfully down without imputing to me anything false. I should be furious if I were, in a recognisable way, described and represented as doing things, obviously piggish or merely not to my taste, which a stranger or an acquaintance might pardonably suppose that I had done. The one sort of work in which I, or any man, need not mind being described, however accurately, and carried through actions, however unlikely, is a thoroughgoing shocker. Much as I should loathe appearing "under a thin disguise" as seducing somebody or indulging in wholesale backbiting (things not uncommon and liable to be believed of any man to whom they are imputed), I should not mind in the least if a novelist painted me as vividly as possible, made identification certain, even spelt my name backwards, or even spelt it forwards, if he made his story obviously false. He could take me and do what he liked with me : make

me emulate the hero of the "Brides in Bath" story, run a baby farm, blow up the Houses of Parliament, or accumulate a fortune by burglary or the abstraction of pennies from blind men's tins. These crimes are not merely crimes that I have not committed and have not (I most earnestly assure you) any intention of committing ; but they are crimes which nobody who knew of my existence (and the others are not in question) would suppose me to have committed. Murders and highway robberies galore may be saddled upon my counterfeit presentment : I shall not merely not mind, but I shall (so strange is the constitution of the human mind) be openly pleased. But the deeds that I might conceivably commit and don't : from the suggestion of these God save me, and us all. It does not matter being the subject of a fairy-tale, but it is most disagreeable to be the subject of scandalous gossip.

RAILROADIANA

I WAS looking over a list of sales to be held this spring in New York by the American Art Association, the Sotheby's of America. All the usual things are to come up: incunabula, illuminated manuscripts, first editions, four Shakespeare folios, etchings by Whistler, eighteenth-century illustrated books. My eye lingered lovingly on some of these categories. I mused on these treasures three thousand miles over the horizon, most of them emigrants from their English homes. But one entry aroused in me not a sentimental hankering, but wonder. A gentleman, or the executor of a gentleman, is disposing of a collection of what, with fine courage, the cataloguer calls "Railroadiana." Why should he not? We have Shakespeariana, Baconiana, and Johnsoniana; nevertheless it looks odd—almost as odd as "aeroplaniana" and "oilenginiana" will look fifty years hence.

I suppose that this hoard of "railroadiana" (we should still call them "Railway Items" or "Books, etc., Bearing on the History of Locomotive Traction" in this country) will probably consist mainly of works illustrating the development of railways from George Stephenson onwards. It is early as yet, and the chances are that the man who made the collection was himself a railwayman or what is called a railway magnate. I don't think that railways have yet got into the field of vision of the collector proper. But they undoubtedly will when they are slightly more venerable and when information

about their origins is more patently useless and recondite. To-day it is the railwayman who forms libraries about his industry. When railways have been transformed or, better, abolished, it will not be the traffic experts who will know about nineteenth-century railways. It will be the bookworms —men who could scarcely drive a perambulator, much less an engine ; just as if anybody is collecting information about Alexander's campaigns we may be sure it is not a soldier. Everything, when it gets hoary, falls into the net of this one class of enthusiasts, the dustmen, the rag, bone, and bottle men of human history. In our great-grandsons' day there will be bald and spectacled collectors who will know by heart the names of the railway systems of our day, and will spend fortunes upon precious scraps of information about those half-forgotten institutions. And the queer thing will be that they will search with most zeal not for large and authoritative books but for odds and ends that we regard as negligible. Posterity's tastes are always surprising.

To-day men collect, and will give large sums of money for, horn-books : little contraptions from which Queen Anne's children, numerous but early dead, learned their alphabets. Children's books of a later date form the substance of specialised collections ; where (as with some of the early compositions of Charles and Mary Lamb) they bear famous names they will fetch their hundreds of pounds, enough money to keep a labourer's family for a year. There are always collectors who go off the beaten tracks of early printing and first editions of the dramatists and prefer to devote themselves to out-of-the-way

literature which will illustrate some aspect of social life. The more ordinary and common the literature was in its own time the more likely, as a rule, it is to be scarce ; yet it is from this sort of thing that we are likeliest to get a peep into the minds of the generality of our ancestors or a notion of their day-to-day lives. The antiquary of the future who wishes to know what our own time was like will get a very distorted picture if he possesses the works of Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Conrad and has never heard of "Home Notes" or Mr. Garvice ; if Sir Edward Elgar's symphonies survive, but not "Get Out and Get Under" or "Pack up Your Troubles." Yet copies of these will be few and hard to get at. The hawkers a hundred years ago sold chapbooks in the streets ; elderly dons now accumulate collections of chapbooks with the utmost pains. The old ballads were hawked to the poor at a penny or twopence ; to-day "a really fine collection of Broadsides" will make the dealers of two continents prick up their ears. Almanacks were common enough, being things useful to everybody in the days of the Tudors. But people bought them to use them, not to stack them on shelves or stow them away in lavender, and the Bibliographical Society was performing an important service to research last year when it published a catalogue of Early English almanacks, many of them of the first rarity. So it will be with the commonest printed wares of our own generation.

Railroadiana ! Yet in a century or two some of these very railroadiana may be in wide demand by classes of people who at present think railways beneath a scholar's or an artist's notice. Books about

mechanical locomotion will be valued in their degree according to age, scarceness, and intrinsic interest. But it may well be that the real gems will not be books, properly so called, but literature which we see but scarcely notice on every table and on every wall. Men hang up to-day as curiosities, in the dining-rooms of old coaching inns, time-tables, yellow and quaint, giving the arrivals and departures of the York or the Exeter Mail. The proprietors of our most venerable theatres point with the greatest pride to play-bills of the eighteenth century, common printed sheets once thrust (for I suppose they did such things) under every door, and now almost as rare as primroses in December. If our odd civilisation continues, as much will happen to the announcements and the time-tables of 1920. I can visualise entries in Sotheby's or Hodgson's catalogue of 2120 :

Lot 2140 : Board of Trade Regulations for the Carriage of Live-Stock by Rail Dated 1920 and signed by H. Jones, Permanent Secretary. Brilliant Impression in perfect order. This document throws a great deal of light on much-vexed questions relating to social life under George V, and some of the detail is very entertaining. Much of it relates to dogs, cats, pigs, etc., the transport of which seems to have engaged much of our ancestors' attention. To the precise determination of charges they seem to have devoted a dialectical subtlety which would do credit to Socrates. Only one other perfect copy of this most curious record is known to exist, and there is none in the British Museum.

Lot 2642 : A series of six "Posters" bearing on various aspects of the war against the old Empire of Germany. No. 1—A Soldier's Cap, with inscription "If the Cap Fits Wear It"; No. 2—Picture of Britannia fighting the Dragon of Prussianism; No. 3—Rescue of British child carrying basket of food, from German by Englishman; No. 4—Picture of typical twentieth-century cottage, "Is not this worth fighting for?" etc., etc. The two first are not known to exist elsewhere.

Lot 5621 : Election "Poster" dated 1918.

The picture is torn across and its exact nature cannot be deduced, but the text—an appeal to the voter to return the Duke of Walton (then Mr. Lloyd George)—is intact.

These things will come up on some afternoon of 2120; but the pearl of the sale will very likely be a set of "Bradshaws" and "A.B.C.s" covering a period of years. What a mine of information our posterity will find those despised guides, which we regard as purely utilitarian, and throw away as soon as we think them out of date! What numbers of stations, and trains, and routes, and fares they specify! Where else will the scholar, where else the investigator of Social Development be able to look for information at once so accurate and so comprehensive concerning an important department of our lives? And where else will the antiquary, the bibliophile, the collector be able to recover so much fragrant detail, such countless suggestions of the lives that we, a quiet, jaded, picturesque, slow-going,

but robust, simple and merry race of people led in an England not yet urbanised, modernised, or developed in accordance with the later conceptions of applied science ? Men often lay up money or lands in order to insure the fortunes of their descendants ; men have been known, trusting to their ability to scent a rising market, to stock their houses with pictures with the same object ; it is reported that in America of recent months prudent men have been doing their best for their progeny by laying down cellars of wine. But I doubt if a man who is willing to take really long views and can trust his children to obey the terms of his will, could do better than lay down in dry, warm bins, not to be disturbed for two centuries, a complete file of " Bradshaw's Railway Guide." That is what will be rare ; that is what they will really appreciate and covet ; that is what will fetch the money. Failing that, any non-literary relics, provided these are sufficiently common and (at present) insignificant, will do. An air-gun, a few sets of Ludo and Halma, an opera-hat, a football cap, a signed photograph of Sir Henry Irving, a few pairs of flannel trousers—a collection like that, kept in good condition, would some day be worth its weight in gold. These things would be regarded as—and perhaps they really are—the bones of history.

ON BEING SOMEBODY ELSE

I HAD recently an experience that I had not previously imagined : a journalist attributed to me a pseudonymous book that I had not written. If the book had been some very trashy novel there would have been obvious reason for annoyance. The point is that it was not a trashy book. On the contrary, it was an unusually good book of its kind ; a book which has been generally praised as brilliant ; a book which I have praised myself ; a book full of knowledge which I do not possess and sagacious epigrams which my poor ingenuity could not have constructed. Yet I was very upset, feverishly anxious to get the canard (which means a duck) stopped. It was not modesty ; I do not deceive myself there. It was not a generous desire not to be credited with powers that are not mine or to filch (which means steal) the honour rightly belonging to some other man. Much as I might wish to be thoroughly moral, I do not think I should ever get really excited, really angry, because I had been given credit that I did not deserve. Far otherwise. My immediate thought was : "Good Lord, I don't want anybody to think I wrote that !" All the great merits of the book faded away before my mind's eye. The few things I actually did dislike about it grew to gigantic size, and swarms of quite imaginary defects came into existence and buzzed around them. I felt as though I had rather anything would happen than that I should be supposed to have written that book. The eyes of the whole population

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(in reality superbly indifferent to the matter and ignorant of my existence) were centred on me, and their lips, to my anguish, said : "There is the author of that mysterious book." I did not care whether I leapt up in the estimation of these millions on account of this supposititious performance. All I was aware of was a desperate anxiety to rid myself of this imputation. I felt that I hated that book worse than any book in the world. "If it had been another book!" I impatiently exclaimed ; and then I paused, for the truth began (as it sometimes does begin) to dawn on me.

The question came into my head : should I have felt like this about any other book ? I put it to myself concretely in detail. Suppose somebody had imputed to me the authorship of one or other of the three or four novels considered the best of our time ? I had no sooner put the question than the repudiation surged up in my throat accompanied with a flood of bitterness. Or such-and-such a fine play ; or So-and-So's epic ; or the collected poems of somebody else, which I have so often and so enthusiastically eulogised ? I began to find that the answer was the same : I should not like it. Mr. Jones is no doubt a great novelist, but I could not bear to be considered guilty of that vulgar passage on page 323. Mr. Smith's plays draw me to the theatre whenever they are staged, but I should be miserable if the public supposed me capable of his lapses in English. Mr. Green's English is undoubtedly beautiful ; but has it quite the highest kind of beauty ? and, anyhow, would it not be intolerable to be presumed to hold his views about morality ? Book after book,

all as highly reputed as contemporary books could be, paraded before my mind, and instant objection was taken to all. Isolated passages might be borne with equanimity or even boasted with pride ; but as wholes, no ! I am glad that such works have been written, but there is not one that I should like either my friends or strangers to suppose that I had written under an assumed name. This book shows a lack of humour with which I should loathe to be saddled ; that a flippancy which I enjoy as reader but surely could not have been guilty of as writer ; to be esteemed the possessor of Mr. White's great powers of ratiocination would not compensate for the disgrace of his constant misquotations from languages which he does not understand ; and how could one hold up one's head if people really deemed one capable of such heavy obtuseness as Mr. Black was guilty of at the beginning of his tenth chapter, otherwise very penetrating ? Some of Mr. Pink's lyrics would be charming to own, but I should blush with shame if it were I who were thought guilty of harping so frequently on his one string. Whatever my faults, I thought, blushing, I am not such an ass as to go on doing such a thing as Pink does time after time.

The train of thought continued. I wondered if I could stomach being saddled with the whole works (for being identified with another author must mean that) of any author from the birth of recorded time. Should I find that even Homer would be too expensive at the price of his occasional nods ? I tried them one after another. I have a great admiration for Lord Tennyson. "The Revenge" and others I

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could appropriate with pleasure, but not if I am to be deemed the nincompoop who wrote :

What does little birdie say
In his nest at break of day ?

or the most pompous passages in “The Princess.” I should at once disclaim identity with Wordsworth, with all his greatnesses, rather than be supposed capable of committing “The Idiot Boy”; Keats’s odes might be well enough, but what about some of those awful trivialities that lurk in corners of his books ? I should write to the papers at once if anybody credited me with the contorted sentences of the great Carlyle, or the cynicism of the great Byron, or the humourless stiffness of the great Milton. Would I, I wondered, even be able to bear it if I were supposed the perpetrator of the gross remarks of Falstaff or the bad word-play of Launcelot Gobbo ? I think not.

So colossal—for I have the consolation of being sufficiently scientific not to think my characteristics unique—is human vanity ; or, more pleasantly, so obstinate is one’s attachment to one’s own personality. Just as we would be burdened with no man’s works, unaltered, so we would exchange natures with no man. I doubt even if there is a man alive who would exchange faces with another, though most faces are, on the face of them, inferior to others. A feature or two might be borrowed perhaps : smaller ears from one man, or a straighter nose from a second, or a whiter nose from another, or a slight accession of hair from a third. But a man

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would not take another man's face intact : he would want to preserve his own, however modified, his own recognisable as the old one ; he can stand fifty blemishes that are born with himself better than one which is proper to somebody else. And, for his intellect, taste, emotions, information, he would not for anything replace them with somebody else's. Other people may be better than he in parts, but they all have vices which he lacks, and these defects he could not bear to contract. In our own secret hearts we each and all of us feel, however poor our outward performances, and whatever the trivial and eradicable weaknesses of which we are conscious, superior to the rest of the world : or, if not superior, at least "different" with a difference that is very precious and beautiful to us, and the base of all our pride and perseverance.

How disturbing, distressing, and humiliating it is to contemplate the truth about oneself ! But how consoling it is that the minds of all our neighbours, those refined men in the club, those complacent or harassed people in the Strand, contain equally strange secrets !

A COMMONPLACE BOOK

STRICKEN with the prevailing malady and too clot-brained to think, I rummaged lethargically among a box of old papers. I was on the Micawber Trail. The best conceivable thing that might turn up would be some forgotten unprinted essay which would at once save me the pain of writing when not really equal to it, and at the same time, perhaps, produce the bogus but useful impression that this hardened sermonizer had suddenly recaptured the first freshness, the spontaneity and the peach-bloom of youth. The hope was not cherished seriously, for there were no grounds for it ; it was entertained merely because it was comfortable. Naturally that essay, carefully composed and precisely suited to the occasion, did not turn up. There is no such essay in that box. There is no such hidden treasure in any box of mine, and least of all would this box contain any. I did find two essays in it. One was headed, in a fair round hand with a fair thick line drawn under the title, "The Character of Oliver Cromwell," and the other, also beautifully superscribed, had for its theme the question, so captivating to the novice who has just pushed open the enchanted gates of Political Science : "Is the State an Organism ?" These titles show how old was that box and how old were the papers. "I remember, I remember the house where I was born." The laburnum may still hang its clusters there, but "I'm farther off from heaven than when I was a boy," and the width of the gap was as

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apparent to me as it was to the poet when I noted with what high seriousness I had once reflected on the organic or inorganic complexion of the State. As for Cromwell, my views seem to have been unsettled ; but one sentence, as I read this estimate of him, came back to me like a remembered scent. It was dubiously relevant ; in fact, rather blatantly dragged in by the scruff of the neck. " Some men are born pious, some achieve piety, and some have piety thrust upon them." The indirect, not so very indirect, reference was to a current controversy about compulsory Chapels ; but the erudite man to whom that sentence was solemnly read aloud did not betray by any blink or quiver a consciousness of the fact. Why should such compositions have been kept, yellowing year after year, for nearly twenty years : lugged, unlooked at, from city to city and house to house, while the Free Trade election, and the Veto election, and the Franco-British Exhibition, and Signorinetta's Derby, and the Wright Brothers, and the Ulster conflict, and a five years' War came and went ? There lie their stiff, creased, foolish folios for all the world as though there were still some use for them, as though their whole period of usefulness was not measured by those quarters of an hour in which they satisfied, or were taken as satisfying, a person in authority. But it is less easy to destroy old rubbish than new, and even new rubbish struggles hard for survival ; and they went back into the box.

There were papers there of all sorts, letters, unreceipted bills, a picture postcard of a giantess, programmes, fixture cards, and a silk rosette on

A COMMONPLACE BOOK

some vanished day emblematic of heaven knows what ! But I came at the bottom on one of those exercise books with blue sides, down which run many little zigzag lines of crescents and thin cylinders in white and red. What on earth, I thought, with something of the emotions of an archæological digger in Egypt or Sicily who sees a bronze foot sticking up through the new soil, what on earth can this be ? It might have been a volume of adolescent verse, escaped the flames through some accident. It might have contained notes (taken down) on the constitution of Athens or (self-made) on Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico." I suppose it might have contained, were it early enough in date, cricket averages ; I know it might have contained, had it been very early indeed, a translation of *Æneid* II into the metre of Macaulay's "Armada," nicely vigorous, perhaps, for the passage in which those horrific serpents ramp over the waves to Laocoön, but not entirely suitable for the more solemn and the more touching moments.

Reluctant to exchange the liberty of the conjectural for the shackles of the real world I stood there, my fingers resting on the unopened book, racking my brain for memories of what it might have been. There came into my mind the recollection of a time when a youth, spasmodically industrious, made a practice of copying into just such books sentences which had struck him when perusing the greatest works of the greatest masters. A queer hotch-potch, remembered indistinctly, in patches. Most of the observations of Dr. Johnson were there transcribed : which should count unto that youth for righteousness.

ESSAYS AT LARGE

There were many *mots* from Gibbon. One of them, thus recorded in adolescence, still sticks in my mind. It is perhaps the largest exaggeration in any serious history: “A thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus.” Truly, an imperial death! Bacon was scoured for this repository of wit and wisdom; it contained enough Montaigne, Macaulay, Sterne, and Burton to supply the calendar makers with “thoughts for the day” for another century. Aristotle was there in some force; nor were the poets lacking. Was this volume before me one of those, once loved and long lost? Should I recover an old critical mood transfixated; would the result be a contemptuous pity for a former rawness and solemnity, or would the volume be a pool in which I should contemplate Narcissus-like features familiar if not without reservation admired? I was on the point of turning the pages when memory made one of her sudden surprising revelations. The covers of those old notebooks stood clear and vivid before the inward eye; they had not been blue, they had both been shiny black, of a limp stiffness. What had been blue?

Then I thought I remembered. Yes, that was blue. The very thought of it brought to my wasted cheeks a blush of shame and guilt. It was a diary. It did not get very far, but what there was of it must have been very abominable. It was not a healthy diary saying that I had been for a walk with Jones, been given a hundred lines, or observed a hoopoe or a Smith’s warbler, or rejoiced over the result of the Boat Race. Introspective it was, written under the shadow of “The Sorrows of Werther,” bought

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second-hand, and the "Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff," strangely encountered and unobtrusively borrowed in my last holidays. What pompous reflections on the world and genius it must have contained ; what terrible symptoms of religious conflict, happily largely imaginary ; and what sickening manifestations of the first conscious stirrings of a virgin heart : poses struck God knows for whom, myself or a dim posterity. If this is that diary, I thought, one swift glimpse will be enough, and it will straightway go into the flames, the flames that should have shrivelled its unwholesome body years ago. That at least, dear though the past may be and sweet the dreams of childhood, I do not wish to recover. Disgusting, morbid, hypocritical : all the apt adjectives rose to my tongue, all the more bitterly as that grim inner voice whispered, in its accustomed way, "Why so venomous ? Do you think you have *really* changed ? "

But I took the plunge and encountered the shock. The book was completely empty. No mark, excepting a faintly pencilled 9d. inside the front cover, defaced its whiteness. Not artistic ambition, it seems, had prompted its preservation, and not sentiment. Only thrift.

SURNAMES

IN spite of the paper shortage and a noticeable distraction that need not be specified, the learned still manage to continue their labours on certain elaborate standard works. Amongst these is Mr. Henry Harrison's " Surnames of the United Kingdom : A Concise Etymological Dictionary," which has been coming out in parts for a very long time. A stranger opening it at the dictionary instalment would have something of a shock. For this first page contains consecutively series of entries like this :

ECK(H)ART { (Ger.) SWORD-BRAVE [O.H. Ger. *Eckart* { *ecka*, weapon-point, sword + *hart*, hard, brave]. The A.-Sax. *Ecgh(e)ard*.
EDELMANN (Ger.) NOBLEMAN [O.H.Ger. *edili*, noble + *man(n)*].
EDELSTEIN (Ger.) PRECIOUS STONE ; JEWEL [O.H.Ger. *edili*, noble + *stein*, stone].
EHRLICH (Ger.) HONOURABLE [f. O.H.Ger. *era*, honour + the adj. suff. *-lich*].
EHRMANN (Ger.) HONOURABLE MAN ; WORTHY [f. O.H.Ger. *era*, honour + *man(n)*].
ELKAN (Heb.) an apocopated form of *Elkanah* (Vulgate *Elcana*)=POSSESSION OF GOD, or WHOM GOD HATH REDEEMED [Heb. *Elqanah* ; f. *El*, God, and *qanah*, to possess, redeem].
ENGEL (Ger.) is the first elem. of various compd. names (see following) : it is the sing. of the national name (O.E. *Engle*, Angles or English : see ENGLAND in Dict.).

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[The etym. is an O.Teut. word for ' meadow,' ' grassland,' seen in O.N. *eng*, M.Dut. *engh*, and O.L.Ger. and O.H.Ger. *angar* (mod. Ger. *anger*), in which last the *-ar* is really a pl. suff. corresp. to the O.N. pl. *-iar*, *-jar* (*engiar*, meadows) : *-el* is the dim. suff.].

2 ANGEL [see ANGEL in Dict.].

Should a copy fall into the hands of Mr. Billing he might hastily conclude that the situation was even worse than he had realised, and that the British race, with the exception of himself, had completely died out. Reference to the index explains this alarming sequence. The dictionary proper has already been completed, and the present instalment is part of an appendix covering the Principal Foreign Names found in British directories. No English names are given except a few in a list of "amendments and additions" at the end.

The instalment, being foreign, is not so interesting to an Englishman as its predecessors. "Pinto," it appears, is Portuguese for "Chick," or "Chickling"; "Schenck" is German for "Wine and Spirit Retailer," and the entry of Schiller runs pathetically as follows :

SCHILLER (Ger.) SQUINTER [for Ger. *schieler*, squinting person ; f. *schel*. M.H.Ger. *schel* (ch. O.H.Ger. *scelah*, awry, squint-eyed)].

Many admirers of the German poet, however, prefer to connect his name with Ger. *schiller*, 'colour-play,' 'iridescence.'

We are not all of us, however, philologists. Philology has got beyond the ordinary reader. In Dr. Johnson's day one was still allowed to put up a little speculation of one's own without the slightest knowledge of Celtic, M.H.Ger., or O.H.Ger. Nares, in his "Glossary," says that in the generation before his a commentator on the old word "gallimaufry" (hotch-potch) seriously suggested that it was originally a fry made for the maws of galley-slaves. When philology was at that stage of development the determination of name-origins would have made an agreeable round game. But we have got past this, and the experts alone are able to express an opinion. The ordinary reader will get entertainment only out of the selected results of research.

In his Introduction, Mr. Harrison gives a variety of amusing detail. It is nothing new that Smith is the commonest English surname ; but there are some surprises amongst the next nineteen : Jones, Williams, Taylor, Davies, Brown, Thomas, Evans, Roberts, Johnson, Wilson, Robinson, Wright, Wood, Thompson, Hall, Green, Walker, Hughes, Edwards. The Welsh element is very noticeable ; the reason is that Wales is abnormally poor in surnames. Almost every Welshman derives his surname from a Christian name, either via "Ap-" (Ap-Hugh = Pugh) or via the genitive (Hugh's [son] = Hughes). John, William, David, Evan, and Robert being the surnames almost exclusively affected by the Welsh, the whole country is covered with Joneses, Williamses, etc. "In many a district Williamses, often not all related to one another, are ridiculously numerous, and various expedients have to be adopted whereby

to distinguish one family from another." It has therefore been suggested that the Joneses and Williamses should adopt new names which the State might authorise. It would not be a bad plan. A Llanelly or Neath football team must be the despair of the reporters who have to write sentences like " Danny Jones got the ball from the scrum, sent a long pass across to Dai Jones, who in his turn disposed of the leather to the red-headed Dai Jones. The latter sprinted along the touch-line, passed to Evan Jones, who kicked across, followed up well, his sprightly namesake reaching the corner before neatly tricking Dai Jones (Neath), and at the last moment sending John Jones (forward) in with a pretty try right behind the posts."

It is in Wales that this paucity of surnames is most noticeable ; in England, however, it is striking in many rural localities. There are colonies of Hunkins in Cornwall, villages of Greens in East-Anglia, and Mr. Harrison records a bad Lancashire example from the district of Marshside, Southport, where the names of Wright, Ball, Sutton, and Rimmer have to do hard service. A supper was given to fishermen and boatmen. At this supper " no fewer than thirty-one men of the name Wright were present. Of these twelve bore the Christian name John ; five William ; four Thomas ; four Robert ; two Henry ; and two Richard ; and, in consequence, the above-named Wrights and others are distinguished in the newspaper report by the following nicknames in brackets after the name proper : Toffy, Clogger, Wheel, Stem, Pluck, Diamond, Shrimp, Hutch, Cock, Sweet, Pantry, Few, Pen,

Fash, Mike, Willox, Strodger, Daddy, Smiler, Nice, Jenny's, Manty, Fullsea, Music, Owd Ned, Margery, Buskin, Orchard, Siff, and Muff." In Scotland, " Smith " is very plentiful, being much the commonest name in the Lowlands. Local peculiarities are very noticeable. In Inverness scarcely a Smith is to be found ; but one person in thirty-three is a Fraser, and one in forty-three a Macdonald. There is something to be said for clan names, however inconvenient ; but there can be no sentimental attachment to names which have originated as the Welsh names did, and much could be said in favour of a deliberate change in Wales.

There is on record one example of a general deliberate adoption of surnames with the co-operation of authority. In the eighteenth century millions of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe were compelled by their Teutonic governors to take surnames. There was good administrative ground for the reform ; but instead of being allowed to choose their own names, the unfortunate Jews were compelled to take names given them by busy or cynical officials. Mr. Harrison tells a story of two Jews coming out of the police office : -

One of them had wisely released a little cash privately over the transaction, and had received a correspondingly respectable name—Weisheit (Wisdom). The other had to be more or less content with Schweisshund (Bloodhound). " Why Schweisshund ? " said the first ; " hast thou not paid enough ? " " *Gott und die Welt !*" returned the second Israelite. " I gave half my fortune to

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have the one letter 'w' put in"—which meant, euphoniously speaking, that an attempt had been made, in the first place, to impose on the unfortunate individual a German equivalent of "Dirty-dog."

Other names recorded by Mr. Harrison as dating from this period of compulsion are Eselshaupt (Ass's-head), Kohlkopf (Cabbage-head, *i.e.*, Block-head), Kanarienvogel (Canary-bird), Kanalgeruch (Canal-smell), Küssemich (Kiss-me), Muttermilch (Mother's Milk), and Temperaturwechsel (Change of Temperature). He does not record the worst I have ever seen. It was referred to in a recent number of *New Europe* by a writer who was discussing Prussian brutalities in Poland. I have forgotten what the German word was; but the English for it is "Abdominal Ulcer." "The Rise of the House of Ulcer!" I doubt if any patronymic on record can equal that.

A TRANSLATOR OF GENIUS

DURING the last few years those who watch the periodical Press may have noticed unobtrusively stealing forth batches of translations from the Chinese by Mr. Arthur Waley. Mr. Waley is one of the most brilliant of our younger Orientalists. His original literary gifts are even rarer than his Chinese scholarship, and 170 "Chinese Poems" contains the first fruits of his poetic industry.

There is very little knowledge of Chinese literature in this country. There is a good deal of misconception as to its nature. People think of the East comprehensively as a place very addicted to what Gibbon calls "the science—or, rather, the language—of Metaphysics." Translators foster the impression—or, at least, do not lay themselves out to dissipate it. Thus, even a series which contains a good deal of very amusing matter (such as the sayings of Chuang Tzu) is portentously named "The Wisdom of the East" series; and most of what little translation has been done from Chinese is, as a fact, concerned with Confucianism and Taoism. People who know about Mencius have never heard of the Tippling Scholar, the Drunken Dragon, or the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Only, I think, Professor Giles, with his excellent "History of Chinese Literature" and his skilful volume of rhymed versions from the poets, has taken pains to show how little the Chinese have been concerned with isms. As Mr. Waley says, their "philosophic

literature knows no mean between the traditionalism of Confucius and the nihilism of Chuang Tzu. In mind, as in body, the Chinese were for the most part torpid mainlanders. Their thoughts set out on no strange quests and adventures, just as their ships discovered no new continents." The glory of their literature is not their speculative work, but their lyric poetry. They do not write epics. They admire brevity, and if a poet cannot say what he wants in a hundred—or, better, in a dozen—lines, they think nothing of him. They have no Homer, Dante, Milton, or Shakespeare. But they have written at least as much great lyric poetry as any nation on earth, and the volume of their good lyric work is unparalleled in the West.

The one thing the Western reader misses is development, conspicuous change. An unusually static—though a high—civilisation and fixed modes of thought have resulted in the subjects and even the forms of poetry remaining very much the same as they were before the great T'ang Age. There is no scholastic dictation as to what should be written about. The Chinese poets wrote about what they thought and felt. But those of one age thought and felt the same things as those of another : they lived the same lives in the same surroundings, with the same unaltering religions and scepticisms and the same tastes. They arrived early at what they considered the perfect forms, the perfect arrangements of tones and rhymes, for short poems, and they have considered even slight variations very daring. Mr. Waley gives translations of what he calls the "Seventeen Old Poems," which date from about the time

of Christ. "These poems," he says, "had an enormous influence on all subsequent poetry, and many of the habitual clichés of Chinese verse are taken from them." I quote one (the translation, like all the others, should be read aloud) :

Green, green,
The grass by the river-bank.
Thick, thick,
The willow-trees in the garden.
Sad, sad,
The lady in the tower.
White, white,
Sitting at the casement window.
Fair, fair,
Her red-powdered face.
Small, small,
She puts out her pale hand.
Once she was a dancing-house girl,
Now she is a wandering man's wife.
The wandering man went, but did not return;
It is hard alone to keep an empty bed.

To the reader of translations this might be of any period ; subject, details, words, turn up again and again for centuries. But, in spite of all their spiritual and technical limitations, the Chinese poets achieve a prodigious amount of variety, all the more wonderful because of the narrow field in which they work. When a good poet is moved to write of the thousand-times-written-about subject of home-sickness or the deserted maiden it is a new thing that he makes, a new beauty of an old kind.

A TRANSLATOR OF GENIUS

Mr. Waley's translations cover a large field ; he gives specimens of poets living as far apart as the fourth century B.C. and the seventeenth of our era. He ignores Li Po, who in the West and in modern China has been regarded as the greatest of all, and takes for his central figure Po-Chu'i, who, he thinks, is inadequately appreciated. Po (ninth century) was, like many great Chinese writers, a provincial governor. Instead of copying out his biography, I may usefully busy myself with giving a few of his poems. The first is a poem rejoicing at the arrival of a bosom friend :

When the yellow bird's note was almost stopped ;
And half-formed the green plum's fruit ;
Sitting and grieving that spring things were over,
I rose and entered the Eastern garden's gate.
I carried my cup, and was dully drinking alone :
Suddenly I heard a knocking sound at the door.
Dwelling secluded, I was glad that some one had
come ;
How much the more, when I saw it was Ch'en
Hsuing !
At ease and leisure,—all day we talked ;
Crowding and jostling,—the feelings of many
years.
How great a thing is a single cup of wine !
For it makes us tell the story of our whole lives.

The next is satirical :

Sent as a present from Annam—
A red cockatoo.
Coloured like the peach-blossom,
Speaking with the speech of men.

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And they did to it what is always done
To the learned and eloquent.
They took a cage with stout bars,
And shut it up inside.

The next is a lament for his little daughter, Golden Bells, who died :

Ruined and ill—a man of two score ;
Pretty and guileless,—a girl of three.
Not a boy,—but, still, better than nothing :
To soothe one's feeling,—from time to time a kiss !
There came a day,—they suddenly took her from
me ;
Her soul's shadow wandered I know not where.
And when I remember how just at the time she
died
She lisped strange sounds, beginning to learn to
talk,
Then I know that the ties of flesh and blood
Only bind us to a load of grief and sorrow.
At last, by thinking of the time before she was born,
By thought and reason I drove the pain away.
Since my heart forgot her, many days have passed,
And three times winter has changed to spring.
This morning, for a little, the old grief came back,
Because, in the road, I met her foster-nurse.

Some of his longest poems are his best ; but I have room here only for two more short ones. The first is on “ The Hat given to the Poet by Li Chien ” ; the second was written after retirement, and is called “ Ease ” :

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Long ago, to a white-haired gentleman
You made the present of a black gauze hat.
The gauze hat still sits on my head ;
But you already are gone to the Nether Springs.
The thing is old, but still fit to wear ;
The man is gone, and will never be seen again.
Out on the hill the moon is shining to-night,
And the trees on your tomb are swayed by the
autumn wind.

Lined coat, warm cap, and easy felt slippers,
In the little tower, at the low window, sitting over
the sunken brazier.
Body at rest, heart at peace ; no need to rise early,
I wonder if the courtiers at the Western capital
know of these things or not ?

Mr. Waley's translations appear to me as good as translations can be. He was right in avoiding rhyme, as there was no hope of reproducing the intricate rhyme-schemes of the originals without gross contortions. His wavelike unrhymed lines have a beauty of their own, and, although the extreme economy of Chinese writing cannot be fully reproduced, his versions are wonderfully terse, exact, and concrete in their imagery. His book, which I hope will be the first of a series, will not only increase English understanding of China, but is a gain to our own literature.

AUTHORS' RELICS

ALL civilisations have cherished relics. There is nothing wrong in that. The superficially logical may put up a case against it, but the student of reality will think it right that men should thus express their proper affections and useful that they should thus minister to the sense of tradition. I think, however, that the passion for relics may be carried too far. Some things are more significant than others, and a few things suffice. Shakespeare's fine-tooth comb would not greatly appeal to me except as a specimen of Tudor workmanship, and when we come to the combs of persons vastly inferior to Shakespeare I feel moved to protest.

The occasion of these remarks is the issue of a catalogue of the Samuel Butler collection preserved in St. John's College, Cambridge. Butler was an eminent, if perverse and eccentric, man. He was educated (as I happen to have been myself) at a college which produced Wordsworth, Herrick, Prior, Sir Thomas Wyat, Greene, Southampton, Burghley, Strafford, Falkland, Palmerston, and divers others. Owing to Mr. Festing Jones's enthusiasm the college has converted an old cloak-room into a Butler museum ; and the contents of this are now displayed before us. The collection at St. John's is certainly extraordinarily comprehensive. Butler's "Life" was remarkable as being more detailed, almost, than any "Life" that ever was written. Mr. Jones not merely let one into the most intimate and the most commonplace records of the Sage's daily

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life, but he went so far as to give us precise and detailed statements of the contents of the various sizes of portmanteaux that Butler took away with him (*a*) for a week-end, (*b*) for a visit to Shropshire, and (*c*) for a trip to the Continent. The clothes, the hair-brushes, the tooth-brushes, and even the tonics and digestive pills were all solemnly catalogued and enumerated. The collection at St. John's is similarly exhaustive.

There is no Wordsworth collection at St. John's, though the famous Pickersgill portrait of the poet sitting (with a red nose) on a rock and watching a pastoral landscape, hangs in the hall, and undergraduates every night swig their beer under it. There is no Herrick collection : it would be difficult to form one : when you have the first edition of the " *Hesperides* " you have pretty well everything that is to be got. No room is set apart for Matthew Prior, the largest paper copy of whose 1718 collected edition is in itself sufficiently bulky to fill a small room. But Butler had a faithful disciple. Butler was preserved. Butler is to be immortalised. And the relics of Butler which have been deposited at St. John's beat for variety and number any such accumulation of mementoes to be found in the world, even at Stratford.

We start with pictures, sketches and drawings by or relating to Samuel Butler. Butler was a dabbler in painting as in every other art : his picture of " Heatherley's Studio " hangs in the Tate, and is well worthy of place there or in any other public gallery. He did a great number of pictures, studies and sketches. When he died some were given to

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elementary schools, some to the British Museum, and some to his friends, amongst whom ranked Alfred Cathie, his astonishing man-servant. Mr. Jones's and Alfred's have gone to St. John's, as also many of Butler's snap-shots and his "camera lucida," which he hoped at one time would do half his sketching work for him. The paintings at St. John's are none of them equal to the fine picture at the Tate : they are mostly daubs of Italian scenes, many of them suitable for illustrations to Butler's work on the "Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont." Next we come to books and music written by Butler, from an article in the college magazine for the Lent term of 1858 to the 1920 French translation of "Erewhon," and including the interesting MS. of his notebooks ; these are rounded off thoroughly with Mr. Festing Jones's "Life," of which the college possesses the first, second and third manuscripts, the proofs, the revises, the advance copy and everything else. Next come books and articles about Butler, and then books which belonged to Butler : who had, as he said, "the smallest library of any man in London who is by way of being literary." Butler's Bible, given to him by his godmother, appears here, and (delicious thing) the "Life of Dr. Arnold," which Butler bought when he was writing his "Life" of his grandfather "because he was told that it was a model biography of a great schoolmaster." Descending the scale we come to Butler's maps, including various reduced ordnance maps of parts of England : that of the South Environs of London is inscribed "S. Butler, 15, Clifford's Inn, Fleet Street, London, E.C. Please return to the above address. The finder,

if poor, will be rewarded ; if rich, thanked." Butler's Music collection was, as one would have expected, composed almost entirely of works by Handel : the "Miscellaneous papers" are more varied. They include the collection of testimonials which Butler submitted when, in 1886, he was candidate for the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Cambridge, various comic newspaper cuttings kept by Butler, a collection of obituary notices of Butler, and the "Menu of Dinner given to Henry Festing Jones on the completion of the 'Memoir.'" Here we are distinctly coming down to details. And after going through various boxes of photographic negatives and a collection of photographs of Butler's family and friends, we come to "Effects : Formerly the Personal Property of Samuel Butler." Here are some of these effects :

One mahogany table with two flaps.

Butler used this table for his meals, for his writing, and for all purposes to which a table can be put.

Sandwich case.

This he took with him on his Sunday walks and sketching excursions.

Passport.

Pocket magnifying glass.

Address book.

Homeopathic medicine case.

He always took this with him on his travels.

Two pen trays.

One tin water-bottle for sketching.

One sloping desk.

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One pair of chamois horns given to him by Dionigri Negri at Varallo Sesia.

One handle and webbing in which he carried his books to and from the British Museum.

One bust of Handel.

Bag for pennies.

Two small Dutch dolls.

A brass bowl my brother Edward brought from India.

The matchbox which Alfred gave to Butler.

It is pretty thorough. I miss Butler's pyjamas, which are totally unrepresented ; and no collection of the kind can be deemed quite complete without some sample nail-parings, some boots, a piece of toast incised by the hero's teeth, and some few studs. There is not even a lock of Butler's hair here. Nevertheless, as I said, it is as varied a collection of the kind as exists. And it is strange that all these relics should have reverently been brought together, placed in a Cambridge college, and dedicated to the memory of one who spent his whole life attempting to reason people out of what he considered their absurd sentimentalism. On Butler's own principles his relics should have been buried with him. But disciples will be disciples, and his disciples were wiser than he.

THE LIBRARIAN'S HARD LOT

IT is commonly assumed that the chief Librarian of a place like the Bodleian or the British Museum has nothing whatever to do. He has gone through his period of storm and stress. He has catalogued ; he has sorted out the new accessions ; he has fetched and carried for readers ; but at last he has been (as men in so many spheres are reputed to be) promoted beyond the dust and trampling, into a region like that of the lotos-eaters where no labour is demanded and the fat fruits of the salary tree drop ripe into the lazily opened mouth. This prevalent misconception has at last stirred Bodley's Librarian to indignation. In the current number of the " Bodleian Quarterly Record " there is an account of what all Bodley's servants, from highest to lowest, have to do ; and the list of duties is so terrifying that I feel, to use Sir Andrew Aguecheek's terminology, that I had as lief be a Puritan as a librarian.

There is plenty of work for the Chief's assistants. The Sub-Librarians are compiling a " Summary Catalogue of Western MSS.," begun in 1890 ; some of the manuscripts are still to be found described only in a catalogue, which may be reasonably considered out of date, printed in 1697. Assistants are on the spot at nine in the morning (when you, reader, are having your tea and biscuits in bed) sorting out the books and letters, entering the acquisitions in a numerical register, examining booksellers' catalogues. What time the Chief Librarian arrives is not stated, but he has so much to do that 5 a.m. by the early

workmen's tram should about meet the case. Here is a summary of some of the complex of calls that are made on him :

Bodley's Librarian takes charge of the entire internal administration of the Library. He assigns duties to the staff, undertakes the more important part of his official correspondence, signs all orders and acknowledgments of donations and copyright accessions, decides on the purchase of MSS. and printed books, deals with suggestions of readers, settles questions touching repairs, accommodation for readers, furniture, boilers, fuel, lavatories, and all such domestic matters. He is also much concerned with accounts, in which he is assisted by a special Assistant. The financial condition of the Library is always precarious ("annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six."). Fortunately things *do* occasionally "turn up," and for a time the Library rises superior to its difficulties. The Librarian confers daily with the staff about their duties, and he is readily accessible to those of the Junior Staff who wish to consult him about their future. His reputation as an Orientalist brings inquiries from all parts of the world, not only about his own special languages—Hebrew, Samaritan, Arabic, and Hittite—but concerning all the other Eastern languages, those of the Turks, Persians, Abyssinians, and, for aught I know, of the peoples who dwell in Bacharia, Moretane, Abchaz, "and the Isle of Pentexoire, that is the land of Prester John." The Librarian is also

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compiling a Catalogue of the Collection of Hebrew books, which is probably the finest in the world. For this undertaking his axiom is, " Nulla dies sine linea." At the moment the most perplexing problem with which he has to deal is the finding of shelf-room in the Bodleian Building for accessions of older works and special collections such as the Backhouse Chinese Collection, and in this connexion it must be remembered that there are special difficulties (*e.g.*, in securing adequate lighting, strength of floors, etc.) in adapting an old building to modern needs.

But this does not finish it, for there is the correspondence.

The correspondence is opened by the Librarian. That is to say such of it as reaches him. It is conceivable that some of it never does. For what does is inscribed to such a variety of erroneous addresses that it cannot but be supposed that there are many letters which completely beat even our ingenious Post Office. That intelligent department has duly delivered to the Bodleian letters addressed to "The Hon. Chairman of the Greek Library," "Signor Library of College and University," "The Directory of the Collection of Holly Bibles," "The Library, College, Oxford," and the name of the institution has appeared as Blodeian, Bodeia, Bodderian, Bodlei Ave, Mogleyan, Bodiliean, Bodleland, Bodbian, Bookian, Bibliothèque Boddeienne, Bibliothèque Bodleisse, and Rodleian Library, Sheffield Oxford. It may be imagined that correspondents who show such eccentricity in their addresses write letters

which are equally original and sometimes equally puzzling. There are, of course, perfectly sensible enquiries (in stacks) about books and MSS. in the library, applications to take photographs, to exchange literature, to read on the premises. But there are others less straightforward. Many people (who usually say they are "fond of books") write for jobs; many (who have been known to describe their wares by giving their weights in lbs. and ozs.) wish to sell old books, usually worthless; and many ask questions. Here are some of the questions and demands which have recently come to this hard-worked gentleman who has such a mass of work to do, let alone looking after the coals and the lavatories:

Did Wesley ever meet or converse with William Pitt during the time that Wesley was Fellow of Lincoln?

[To settle a golfing bet] which of the following is correct, "If a match fails to keep its place on the green" or "If a match fail to keep its place on the green"?

Is the acacia tree in my garden the first one planted in England?

I beg of you to send me the complete catalogues of your libraries, publications, etc. Kindly ask all the bibliographical, catalogue, Directory and reference book publishers of Britain and Europe to send me their complete catalogues. You may please circulate this P.C. among the librarians and Chancellors of all the British Universities for attention. Please ask all the chief librarians of

THE LIBRARIAN'S HARD LOT

all the European libraries to do the same for me. Kindly name and ask all the oriental publishers and oriental institutes of Britain and Europe to send me their catalogues and journals. An early compliance.

On top of this a hundred thousand readers a year enter the Library, and continual rearrangement is necessary, which means at present the regrouping of about an eighth of a million books per annum.

“ For the successful shifting, incorporation and allocation of room for growth of large sections of books,” says the Librarian plaintively, “ a considerable capacity for organisation is essential ; muscle is also desirable.” This work of portage, at least, the Librarian does not do himself.

I shall never again regard the Bodleian as a home of rest. I am not an Oxford man, but I have often passed those mouldering heads of the Cæsars and walked into the ancient quadrangle of the Bodleian thinking it the quietest place in the world. The green turf, the crumbling stone walls, the little old doorways, the ancient lettering : I have stood there, with none but myself looking, and ruminated that here above all one had found a “ haunt of ancient peace.” It has seemed that inside (I have never been inside) there could be nothing but ancient medical and theological treatises, huge Bibles chained to desks, crabbed manuscripts of antique scholarship, and drowsy spectacled old men keeping what only courtesy could call a watch over them. How false a vision ! No beehive is the scene of more frenzied industry ; no council table, no Stock Exchange,

beholds more frantic rendings of hair, more heart-burnings, more bewilderment, more chafing at the maddening stupidity of things and men. Even at this moment Bodley's Librarian is probably sitting there trying to answer some ridiculous question about Napoleon or miserably writing to inform some illiterate Baboo that he cannot be made Keeper of English Verse, whilst his brain reels at the thunder of the multitudes of thronging readers and the trucks conveying books from one unknown destination to another. I at least will never do a great librarian an injustice again.

DISRAELI'S WIT

AM one of those who like calendars containing brief pieces of "wit and wisdom culled" from eminent writers: though nothing is more horrible than a collection of such cullings from a writer who is not good enough. I opened, therefore, with some curiosity "The Disraeli Calendar," put together by Mrs. Henry Head, who has demonstrated her gifts as a selector before this. I was not sure that I should like so much Disraeli in brief bits: it might be thin. But my fears were ungrounded, and the book should do something to assist that recovery of Disraeli's reputation as a writer which began when the first volume of the Moneypenny biography recalled attention to him.

The volume contains extracts from his letters and a fair number of passages illustrating his habitual manner of thought and his occasional genuine moods. There is a touch of sincerity about the romantic view of the Tory Party on the first page. We can hear Disraeli thinking in this passage from "Endymion": "Great men should think of Opportunity, and not of Time. Time is the excuse of feeble and puzzled spirits. They make Time the sleeping partner of their lives to accomplish what ought to be achieved by their own will. . . . Power, and power alone, should be your absorbing object, and all the accidents and incidents of life should only be considered with reference to that main result." We have here the ambitious Disraeli's declaration that "the time will come," and the reflective Disraeli

in the bitter passage on Progress which ends with the Inge-like remark that “ the European talks of progress, because, by an ingenious application of some scientific arguments, he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilisation.” We do not get here—I don’t think we get anywhere —anything like the whole Disraeli : but we are given illustrations of all those aspects which he showed the world.

But the compiler of this Calendar, having as her prime object the production of an amusing book, has not confined herself, or even devoted her main attention, to extracts which illustrate the various sides of Dizzy’s character, his political thought, or his power as a novelist ; half her quotations are squibs and mots. They are often very good, always tersely expressed, and anyone who examines the following specimens will, I think, easily identify the type to which they belong :

Lord and Lady Mountjoy, . . . unfortunate people, who with a large fortune, lived in a wrong square, and asked to their house everybody who was nobody.

“ Does your Highness take snuff ? ” “ Thank you, no ; I’ve left off snuff ever since I passed a winter at Baffin’s Bay. You’ve no idea how very awkward an accidental sneeze is near the pole.”

“ It is very immoral, and very unfair,” said Lord Milford, “ that any man should marry for tin who does not want it.”

“ They say primroses make a capital salad,” said Lord St. Jerome.

Time has brought us substitutes, but how inferior ! Man has deified corn and wine ! but not even the Chinese or the Irish have raised temples to tea and potatoes.

How those rooks bore ! I hate staying with ancient families, you're always cawed to death.

Her features were like those conceptions of Grecian sculpture which, in moments of despondency, we sometimes believe to be ideal.

I hate a straightforward fellow. As Pinto says, if every man were straightforward in his opinion, there would be no conversation.

A coquette is a being who wishes to please. Alas ! coquettes are too rare. 'Tis a career that requires great abilities, infinite pains, a gay and airy spirit. . . . A charming character at all times; in a country-house an invaluable one.

" Well, I always have had a prejudice against Pontius Pilate," said Lord Cadurcis.

Nothing is more undignified than to make a speech. . . . Every charlatan is an orator, and almost every orator is a charlatan.

I declare when I was eating that truffle, I felt a glow about my heart that, if it were not indigestion, I think must have been gratitude.

What do these accents recall ? or, rather, what did they anticipate ? Is there anything closer in English to the manner of Oscar Wilde ?

It is not merely that there is a resemblance between the expression of the two men, between the

shapes of those brief and antithetical epigrams, those sentences with smirking parentheses or surprising ends. Their very material is largely the same. The Dizzy calendar is as full of puns as the Oscar Wilde calendar : each found his principal materials in the world of the diner-out, and each exploited to the full the possibilities of the obvious and unusual truth, and of the obvious and unusual falsehood. At their best no two epigrammatists more closely resemble each other ; and though the comparison should not be pressed too far, the similitude does not fade away when one gets beyond the mot. In Disraeli sentence often flows into sentence in what we have become accustomed to think the typical Wildean way. "The world admired him, and called him Charley, from which it will be inferred that he was a privileged person, and was applauded for a thousand actions, which in anyone else would have met with decided reprobation." It is the familiar manner : and part of the effect of the sentence springs from the fact that, somehow, it is odd to hear a word like "Charley" on the lips of the highly-conscious dandy Disraeli, a sort of oddity of which Wilde was well aware and which he often exploited. But one can quote other passages in which the material used was material never used by anyone but Disraeli before Wilde, though Wilde made it fashionable in the 'nineties. Take this : "I have a passion for living in the air," said Herbert ; "I always envied the shepherds in 'Don Quixote.' One of my youthful dreams was living among mountains of rosemary, and drinking only goat's milk. After breakfast I will read you Don Quixote's

description of the golden age. I have often read it until the tears came into my eyes": it is simply one of Wilde's Cyrils or Eustaces speaking; we can hardly believe it. Or take the mock-serious, hypersensitive æstheticism of this: "Mr. Phœbus one morning opened a chest in his cabin and produced several velvet bags, one full of pearls, another rubies, another Venetian sequins, Napoleons and golden piastres. 'I like to look at them,' said Mr. Phœbus, 'and find life more intense when they are about my person. But bank notes, so cold and thin, they give me an ague.'"

I hasten to add that there is a point at which the resemblance ceases. Dizzy had great powers as a novelist: such things as the descriptions of "low life" in "Sybil" were beyond Wilde's range, though not beyond his appreciation, and he would be an audacious critic who should maintain that Wilde, born under a luckier star, might have become Prime Minister and an idol of the Conservative Party. And, as the close, I remember that he was anticipated at least once elsewhere, in the works of the almost universal Dickens. People often discuss whether Mr. Harold Skimpole's character resembled Leigh Hunt's; they have not, I think, noticed that his conversation was exceedingly like Wilde's. Turn to his conversations, and especially to that in which he drew the attention of the bailiffs to the beauties of Nature, and you will see what I mean.

AN EDIFYING CLASSIC

I HAVE—if I may be permitted so personal a confession, on account of its relevance—a number of small sons. Like other fathers I have to get them books. It goes to the heart of a professional reviewer to buy any book whatever : one feels about such purchases as a dramatic critic must feel when circumstances compel him to fork out ten and six-pence (plus tax) for a stall. But I do not receive children's books from editors, and their authors, whom I do not commonly know, never send me presentation copies of them. Every Christmas, therefore, and on various natal days sprinkled over the year, I sally out to explore the bookshops for all the world as though I were an ordinary member of the purchasing public. I am seldom entirely pleased with the books I buy. I will not say that my children are not, for their tastes seem to be remarkably indiscriminate. But I have fancied (and how can it be otherwise where children have such obviously exceptional natural gifts) that on the whole the better kinds of books have pleased them best : that "The Jungle Book" and "Alice in Wonderland" have been a more permanent delight to them than "Teddles at the Seaside" and "Florrie's Baa-Lamb." I, therefore, went out this Christmas determined not to buy any of the ephemeral modern rubbish which is written for children by half-wits who succeed in getting other half-wits to collaborate with illustrations, but to add to the number of those standard works which never lose their attraction. I will, I said, get a children's classic.

AN EDIFYING CLASSIC

What shall it be, I wondered ? There is “ *Æsop* ” : they have it. There are Grimm and Andersen, but they have those. The expurgated “ *Gulliver’s Travels* ” is not unknown to them ; they know all about Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Crusoe ; they at present dislike the “ *Arabian Nights*, ” and I’m hanged if I’m going to give them “ *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. ” As I walked to the station my thoughts travelled back to a distant, vivid, but almost unreal past, in which I saw a small boy curled up in an armchair reading. What was it he read with most zest ? It came to me in a flash. I hadn’t heard the book mentioned for years. It was “ *The Swiss Family Robinson*. ” Why, of course, that of all books was the book ; I would get it. And I would read it again myself. I would recover the old excitement over that battle with the snake ; I would refresh my memory as to the habits of the armadillo and the duck-billed platypus ; and, above all, I should see that picture of the house in the tree which was the basis of the earliest of my ambitions, and (alas !) the least likely to be fulfilled, unlikely though all the others may be. At the end of a day, however, I had learned that it is one thing to want to buy “ *The Swiss Family Robinson* ” and another to get it. I went to shop after shop, and the booksellers looked at me as though I were asking them for a plesiosaurus or a mastodon. They had no copies of it ; they held out little hope of obtaining a copy. I tried the second-hand booksellers. Their tune was quite different. They often had copies, but these were always snapped up at once. In the end I persuaded a sceptical bookseller that the book must be obtainable,

and that it was his duty as an honourable tradesman to obtain it for me instead of trying to induce me to buy the latest specimen of Mr. Arthur Rackham's beautiful art. Now, a fortnight after Christmas, it has arrived. I have been reading it.

There is no picture of the house in the tree. But the rest is all there : the incredibly simple style, the pious family, the industry, the remarkable congeries of animals, the woodcuts, the harpooned walrus, the " trusty double-barrels," the thousand exciting encounters, and above all the episode of the enormous boa-constrictor :

Fritz remained by me while I examined the object through my spy-glass.

" It is, as I feared, an enormous serpent ! " cried I, " it advances directly this way, and we shall be placed in the greatest possible danger, for it will cross the bridge to a certainty."

" May we not attack it, father ? " exclaimed the brave boy.

" Only with the greatest caution," returned I, " it is far too formidable, and too tenacious of life, for us rashly to attempt its destruction. . . .

“ Only see,” I replied, “ how the monster deals with his victim [the donkey] ; closer and more tightly he curls his crushing folds, the bones give way, he is kneading him into a shapeless mass. He will soon begin to gorge his prey, and slowly but surely it will disappear down that distended maw ! ” . . . I expected that the boa, before swallowing its prey, would cover it with

saliva, to aid in the operation, although it struck me that its very slender forked tongue was about the worst possible implement for such a purpose.

It was evident to us, however, that this popular idea was erroneous.

The act of lubricating the mass must have taken place during the process of swallowing : certainly nothing was applied beforehand.

This wonderful performance lasted from seven in the morning until noon.

Was there ever anything like it ?

It is a superb book. It is easy to make fun of it. Everybody when he remembers it remembers it with a smile ; but it is usually a smile of affection. The style, as I have remarked, is the greatest example of naive pomposity which we possess. The improbabilities (over and above the great obvious improbability of every kind of bird and beast in the Zoo being concentrated on a single island) follow each other without a break, and no edifying storyteller on record ever pumped out his edification with so little attempt at concealment. Here is no education in parenthesis and no moralising by implication : the morals are expounded in sermons, and the facts, mainly zoological, are handed out in large wads, accompanied by frankly informative illustrations. By all the rules of story-telling, as expounded by critics and observed by conscious artists, this book was bound to fail ; the most innocent child must inevitably be bored by it. But the point is that it didn't fail. I do not think that I was more addicted to sermons than any other child

or less fond of being educated ; but I do clearly remember that I was thrilled by this story, and that the irrelevant details here never struck me as irrelevant. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for the author, when mentioning an ant-eater, to digress in order to tell all about ant-eaters ; and I happened to be interested in ant-eaters. With the exception of "The Pilgrim's Progress" (which is on a much higher literary plane), I do not remember any book in which so large a didactic element is so successfully conveyed in a story. And the author managed it because he was a man of extraordinary simplicity, sweetness, goodness, and curiosity, a man with much of the child in him, who went straight ahead as he felt inclined, and never thought at all of himself or of art. The author, I say. But who was he ? This *is* a classic beyond all dispute. On the title page of this book appear no names but those of the editor (the late W. H. G. Kingston) and a horde of ancient and modern illustrators, of whom the ancient are the better. Either the editor did not know the author's name, or else he simply forgot all about him, automatically regarding the book (but few of the greatest books are looked at in this way) as something impersonal and established, like Stonehenge or a phenomenon of Nature. Wasn't he a pastor ? Wasn't his name, *mustn't* it have been, Muller or Schmidt ? I don't know. I am away from home. The only work of reference within my reach is Colonel John Buchan's "History of the War," and I have searched the index of that in vain.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

I DO not receive many Christmas cards. This is not surprising as I never remember to send any out. The most I have ever done, when feeling most strenuous, was to scramble out a few New Year's cards to people who had sent me Christmas cards, and whose remembrance of me stirred my gratitude. But I do always get some, and I got a few this year.

I have just been looking at them all before cremating them. Those which come from the more intellectual of my friends have no longer anything peculiarly Christmas cardy about them. They are in good taste, designed by or for the senders, admirably printed, and, in point of language, ready for the scrutiny of the most fastidious critic of style. Nothing could be more refined. There are no sprigs of holly on these, no claspings of amputated hands, no squat village towers amid snowy landscapes. They have brown collotype pictures of the owners' houses, choice etchings after Rembrandt, or exquisite coloured reproductions of St. Vincent and a Donor by Melozzo da Forli in the Palazzo Doria-Pamphili at Rome. Each card of them is a silent protest against the old kind of card. As I look at them I hear them saying, "What an improvement we are ! How clearly we demonstrate that Christmas greetings can be conveyed without vulgarity. What careful consideration we betray ! The men and women who chose *us* really wished to send their friends something worth having." There is a beautiful

woodcut on yellowish hand-made paper, with "A Happy Christmas" as only inscription. There is a page from an illuminated manuscript. There is a card especially written out by an expert calligrapher. There is another displaying choice specimens of seventeenth-century typographical ornament. All very chaste, and not one of them (I need scarcely say) bearing a line of verse, even of good verse.

Yet from the more old-fashioned and less aspiring remnant of my acquaintance there still come a few tokens of the old Victorian sorts, freely powdered with Robin Redbreasts and mistletoe, and carrying quatrains to a card. It was one of these quatrains that checked me in the middle of my campaign of destruction and made me begin these reflections. It runs as follows :

Glad Christmas to you on this day,
Good Fortune ever find you,
Life's Sunlight be before you aye,
Its shadows all behind you.

Well, you will say, there is nothing very odd about that : it is precisely like thousands of others. Wait a moment. The odd thing is that under those verses is printed the name "Browning."

I stand open to correction. I have, I admit, not searched Robert Browning's works for this sequence of elegant sentiments. But I really cannot suppose that he wrote it. Nor can I believe that his wife wrote it. Nor can I even believe that Mr. Oscar Browning wrote it, and with him is exhausted the catalogue of the Brownings known to fame or me. There have

been, no doubt, other Brownings. John Browning or Nicodemus Browning may have been the author of this composition ; or George Bernard Browning, or J. Pierpont Browning, or some inglorious but not altogether mute Ella Wheeler Browning. But if Robert Browning was really the author he must certainly have had a bad off day, on which his style was indistinguishable from that of any other Christmas card poet. And the common style of the Christmas card poets reaches the lowest known or conceivable level of banality in conception and tameness in execution.

I look through some of the other missives which have been sent to me in the hope (I must presume) of cheering me up, of inducing merriment and an optimistic outlook. Here are some of the verses on them—if I am committing breaches of copyright I must apologise :

(1)

To you and those within your home
This Christmas day may blessings come,
And may good luck, good health, good cheer
Be guests of yours for all the year.

(2)

As on Life's tide the seasons come and go
May sorrow ebb and gladness ever flow.

(3)

Milestones of olden memories,
Along sweet friendship's way ;
Oh ! how they brighten up the past,
And cheer the coming day.

(4)

Greeting just to say we all unite,
In wishing you and yours a Christmas bright.

(5)

Deck out the walls with garlands gay,
And let the kindly laughter play.
List ! the chimes are sweetly sounding
Xmas happiness abounding :
All that's good and true be thine
At this merry festive time.

(6)

This is the time for sweet remembrance,
For thoughts of friends both old and new ;
The words will not express the wishes
Sent within this card for you.

If Browning wrote one of them why not the lot ? There is, I admit, a touch of *Mrs.* Browning about the rhyme of " time " and " thine " in number five, and the elaborate maritime image in number two has perhaps a touch of Swinburne. But except for these very slight local differences the whole of these, not to mention thousands of others, all that you have ever seen and all that your Aunt Maria has ever seen, might have come from one pen. It is amazing that every publisher of Christmas cards should have " on tap " a bard so skilful that he can turn out hundreds of these poems without ever introducing a touch of individuality or novelty. For somebody must write them, even if it be only the chairman of the manufacturing company or the

compositor who does the type-setting. Who are these mysterious people ? Are they scattered amateurs everywhere ? Or is it here that we find the explanation of how our professional and justly celebrated poets earn their living ? Or is this one of those industries which are the hereditary monopoly of a few families like flint-knapping, violin-making and gold-beating ? Does Mr. Jones, of Putney, whose neighbours know him for one who " goes up to the City " every morning on some vague but presumably respectable business, really immure himself for eight hours per diem in an office in Chancery Lane and compose those verses which he never mentions at home, his father having left him a very valuable connection with the makers ? Or—this is another solution—is it really that nobody has written any new ones for years ?

Our enlightened capitalists are always said to be exploring new methods of eliminating waste. May it not be that it long ago occurred to one of them that a sufficient accumulation of Christmas verses was now in existence, that there was no difference between old ones and new ones, that nobody could even remember if he had seen one of them before, and that it was criminally extravagant to go on employing labour in the fabrication of a constant supply of new goods before the old were worn out ? Surely if these truths were not grasped by keen business minds in the old days of fat and plenty they must have occurred to somebody during the war when every ounce of effort had to be put into war-work, and he who mis-employed labour was helping the Germans. If not, are we to understand

ESSAYS AT LARGE

that the composers of Christmas verses, after five years' inactivity, have actually been set to work again at their own trade—or (awful thought) that some of those extraordinary tribunals exempted them as indispensable ?

QUOTATIONS

MOST dictionaries of quotations are large and fat volumes. Only gamekeepers have pockets large enough to hold them, and they, therefore, have the drawback that they can only (unless their contents be memorised) be used in the Home or the Office. This apparently has struck Mr. Norman MacMunn, who has brought out a "Companion Dictionary of Quotations," which is of handy size. I have wasted—but that is an offensive word—a good deal of time over it since my copy reached me. It is full of so many good things. All you have to do is to think of a subject, turn to its entry (the work is alphabetically arranged), and find the totally surprising or the terribly inevitable things the greatest of the world's philosophers and poets have said about it. Who, looking up "Madness," would expect to find the only quotation these lines from Dryden's "The Spanish Friar":

There is a pleasure
In being mad which none but madmen know.

Many of the entries are like that, and where there is more than one they usually contradict each other. Take "Failure." You gets Keats saying, "There is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object," and George Eliot: "The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best." The sages are just like the populace which produces proverbs. You can justify any course of action with a proverb, and buttress it with advice from the august. This dictionary is, as it

were, a picture of the mental confusion of man faced with the many-sidedness of truth. A weak-minded reader might be utterly demoralised by it. In a book like this, somehow, all voices seem to speak with equal authority and every proposition seems to have the same weight.

I like Dictionaries of Quotations. I have a taste for wisdom in a phrase, and any assembly of extracts from authors will hold me. I have been known to spend half a morning reading a calendar, one of those fat calendars from which it is such agony to tear off March 1 or March 2, because it means putting into the waste-paper basket or the fire that sentence of Bacon or Epictetus which struck one as being so true, so profound, so precisely what one has always thought oneself. I always read the "Thought of the Day" in the *Westminster Gazette*, that elevating sentiment from Wordsworth or Mazzini, and nothing in the *Observer* pleases me more than that little cage of "Sayings of the Week" in which the best things of our wits rub shoulders with the most alarming predictions of our geologists and eugenists. I have, in fact, a passion for scraps, and I can read a Dictionary of Quotations as easily as any work in the world. But I do not regard it as a Dictionary, and I never gull myself into a belief that it is of the slightest practical utility to me. And I doubt if the greater part of any dictionary of quotations is useful to, or used by, anybody. There are remarkably few of us who ever think of quoting anything at all. Those who do almost invariably use hack quotations. And nobody would dare to quote, even in print, even in an anonymous leading

QUOTATIONS

article, most of the apt allusions given by the—I'm sorry—quotational lexicographers.

These dictionaries are used by journalists to verify quotations they know already, quotations the use of which is almost a matter of sacred ritual on certain occasions. Somebody dies. It occurs to an obituarist that once again a man has died, upon whose like, take him for all in all, we shall not look again. He doesn't want to risk misquotation and he starts a hunt, usually prolonged, through the dictionaries, ultimately running his quarry down under a heading where it has been least expected. Or "The child is father of the man" comes in an author's head, and he can't remember whether it was Mark Twain or Tennyson who wrote the sentence, or has a vague idea that there were other words after those which would also be worth quoting. A reference to Dr. Brewer and Mr. MacMunn will put him straight. But don't tell me that there are many people who habitually, when writing articles or letters, look up the "subject" in a dictionary and use whatever quotation comes to hand. All Mr. MacMunn's quotations are interesting, but I cannot conceive occasions on which I shall dare use any but a few of them. Imagine the sensation which would be made if, when the fact of somebody being away was mentioned in conversation, I remembered my MacMunn and poignantly delivered myself of :

Absence ! is not the soul torn by it
From more than light, or life, or breath ?
'Tis Lethe's gloom, but not its quiet—
The pain without the peace of death.

ESSAYS AT LARGE

And if I could not use it in conversation, I am sure that I could not in correspondence. There are times and seasons when I am sure that I should find a perfect expression of my feelings in another sentence from Mr. MacMunn's first page, the sentence from Sadi's "Gulistan" :

If the man of sense is coarsely treated by the vulgar, let it not excite our wrath and indignation ; if a piece of worthless stone can bruise a cup of gold, its worth is not increased, nor that of the gold diminished.

Yet when, I ask, accurate though it is, am I to use this observation of the sagacious Oriental ? In what controversy ? At the foot of what retort ? It can't be done. And if I, a professional litterateur, with incorrigible leanings to the bookish, the flowery, the high-falutin, should find my tongue cleaving to the roof of my mouth when I had got as far as "If the man of sense," what would be the feelings of the less specialized person, though he might have learnt his MacMunn by heart ? Our optimistic compiler thinks he may be of assistance to school children, and "to the busy man or woman who occasionally may wish to use appropriate quotations." But what would one think of a grocer who should apologise for the sugar shortage with "The sweetest meats the soonest cloy," or a housemaid who should demurely shield off a rebuke with :

Be to her faults a little blind
And to her virtues very kind.

QUOTATIONS

Lawyers are referred to as amongst those who are to be assisted. It is true that Sir E. Marshall Hall and others have a remarkable gift for bringing in Shakespeare. But even Sir Edward would scarcely have described his client's sufferings in the words of Shakespeare that Mr. MacMunn gives under the heading "Tears":

The big round tears
Cours'd one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase.

Who would dare quote this? When? Where?

The range of possible quotation, except in meditative essays, is rare. And perhaps it is just as well. If everybody indulged in free quotation and used a dictionary as a crutch all the best things that ever were said would be as stale as "To be or not to be," and we should be utterly cloyed and sickened with the names of the Great Dead. I have never met an inveterate quoter, a real devotee of these dictionaries. He would be more amusing as a character in fiction than as a companion in life. . . . My eye catches another quotation. It is from Goethe, and runs: "Can it be maintained that a man thinks only when he cannot think out of that which he is thinking?" I cannot go on after that. I shall ring for a wet towel and settle down to it.



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